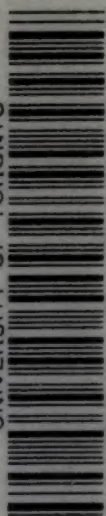


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## PREFACE

ABOUT twenty-eight years ago, I delivered a series of lectures on "English Politicians from Bolingbroke to Gladstone," introduced by a discourse which sought to outline general laws of political evolution. Several of the lectures were soon afterwards written out in a greatly expanded form; and the introductory one, by a series of expansions, became a large book of which the second edition is entitled "The Evolution of States: An Introduction to English Politics." Thus late in the day I have set about completing the long delayed scheme of the series of studies which dealt with the political evolution of England during nearly two hundred years.

It may be asked why this ground, so often traversed, should now be gone over again. Why, for instance, should any one want to write on Walpole after the production of so masterly and brilliant a book as the *Walpole* of Lord Morley? The answer is that the original scheme of these studies was to set forth a total process of politico-social evolution; to view the leading politicians as they related to the total life of their time; to deal with politics as a phase or function of that total life; and accordingly to consider intellectual and economic aspects of the social process which books on politics and politicians do not usually face.

The last generation produced many intelligent and instructive studies in English political biography—for instance, the *English Premiers* of J. C. Earle (2 vols. 1871),



the *Representative Statesmen* of A. C. Ewald (2 vols. 1879), the *Statesmen Series* edited by L. C. Sanders, the *Twelve English Statesmen* series, that of *The Prime Ministers of Queen Victoria*, edited by S. J. Reid, and a number of very competent separate monographs on statesmen of the eighteenth as well as of the nineteenth century. It may be that they are all the better for following one always interesting and attractive method—that, broadly speaking, of Macaulay's *Essays*. An attempt to present politics along with its background and basis of culture and economic life runs risks at once of dullness and of fallacy which are not incurred by political biography on the well-established line. But the end of the Great War seems a time when, if ever, past politics should be studied as an evolutionary process—as in fact the life of a community considered as a socio-political whole. And though the late Mr. Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* is always suggestive, its sociological interpretations are of less value than its general survey.

It may well be argued, again, that the sociological end had better be sought by way of a generalized presentment, in which politicians are not made the central figures of periods but considered as mere functionaries of a total movement. But it has seemed to me that politics can be most intimately understood, whether as science or as art, by constantly considering the whole relation of the statesman to his ever-changing problem—his character, his preparation, his difficulties, his devices. The choice and action of every one of us is such an equation; and all political progress is a matter of the better political education of the individual. A merely theoretic study of political problems is in the nature of things imperfectly educative: the issue always emerges



in life as a conflict and an adjustment of wills ; and the best preparation for that is a realization of the personalities and the conditions of past struggles. Hence my adherence to the original plan—which further presents a series not merely of statesmen or prime ministers, but of politicians. Burke, Paine, Cobbett, and Cobden are important forces ; the Pelhams and the Liverpools and Melbournes are not.

Some small personal share in active politics in the interim has perhaps enabled me to correct some of the judgments of the earlier written studies of the series—those on Bolingbroke and Walpole, Burke, Beaconsfield and Gladstone—and to handle with more comprehension the others. The whole series (if it be ever completed) would be a forbiddingly bulky collection to present as one book. Its utility, then, can best be tested by the issue of volumes in chronological order.







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## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 1701 Robert Walpole (b. 1676) and Henry St. John (b. 1678), afterwards Viscount Bolingbroke, enter Parliament. Newton member for Cambridge University. Tory prosecutions of Somers and other Whig leaders started in Commons. The "Kentish Petition" presented against such proceedings. Death of James II. Parliament dissolved. Defoe's *True-Born Englishman* published.
- 1702 War against France decided on. Act of Attainder against the Pretender. Death of William and accession of Anne. Parliament dissolved. (Third election in two years.) Large Tory majority returned. Defoe's *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. *The Daily Courant*, first daily paper. One folio page, giving paragraphs from Dutch and French papers.
- 1703 Birth of John Wesley.
- 1704 Robert Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford (b. 1661), and St. John Secretaries of State—St. John for War. Act of Security for Scotland, excluding the Pretender. Battle of Blenheim. Gibraltar taken. Newton's treatise on Optics. Defoe's *Giving Alms no Charity*. Rev. John Harris's *Universal English Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*—a large folio. First daily newspaper at Boston, Mass. Death of Locke.
- 1705 Tory ladies displaced by Whigs at Court. Commission appointed to arrange Union with Scotland.



- 1705 General Election. Newton (Whig) stood (third time) for Cambridge University, and was at the bottom of the poll.  
 Halley predicts the return in 1758 of the comet of 1682.  
 Defoe's *Review of the Affairs of France* begun.
- 1706 Convocation prorogued.  
 Defoe's *Essays at removing National Prejudices against a Union with Scotland*, and corresponding Essays (three in all), begun to be published at Edinburgh.  
 Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (verse nucleus).
- 1707 Act of Union with Scotland. The national style becomes "Great Britain."  
 Defoe's *Review* issued as *Review of the State of the British Nation*.  
 Newton's *Arithmetica Universalis*.
- 1708 Dismissal of Harley and St. John. "The junta" in power—Somers, Halifax, Wharton, Sunderland, Oxford. Walpole Secretary at War.  
 Armorial bearings first taxed.  
 Lord Shaftesbury's *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*.
- 1709 *The Tatler* begun.  
 Berkeley's *Theory of Vision*.  
 Queen Anne's husband, Prince George of Denmark, having died three months before, Parliament implores her to consider marrying again (all her seventeen children having died).  
 Hauksbee's *Physico-Mechanical Experiments* (electricity).
- 1710 Trial of Sacheverell and Tory success in the elections.  
 Ministry of Harley and St. John (Foreign Secretary).  
 Walpole impeached by the House of Commons.  
 Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*.  
*The Examiner* (Tory) begun, with Swift as contributor.  
 Vol. ii of Harris's *Universal Dictionary* (1300 subscribers).
- 1711 Death of Emperor Joseph. Accession of Charles VI.  
 Guiscard attempts to assassinate Harley, who on his recovery is created Earl of Oxford and Mortimer and Knight of the Garter.



- 1711 Harley sets up scheme of South Sea Company to finance National Debt.  
 Printers, publishers and booksellers prosecuted by Bolingbroke for "libels on the administration."  
*The Spectator* begun.  
*The Edinburgh Courant* begun (by Defoe).  
*Shaftesbury's Characteristics*.  
 Newton's *Method of Fluxions*, etc. (written 1669).
- 1712 Dismissal of Marlborough. Walpole sent to the Tower.  
 St. John created Viscount Bolingbroke.  
 Death of Richard Cromwell, aged 86.  
 Jane Wenham found guilty of witchcraft by a jury, but saved by the judge from death penalty.  
 Queen Anne announced in the *Gazette* to "touch" publicly for the cure of "King's evil."  
 Pope's *Rape of the Lock*.
- 1713 Treaty of Utrecht. Monopoly of Spanish American Slave Trade secured to Britain.  
 Gibraltar ceded to Britain.  
 Schism Bills passed in both Houses to crush Dissenters.  
 General Election. Tories in a majority.  
*The Guardian* begun.  
 Anthony Collins's *Discourse of Freethinking*.  
 Collins sees fit to cross to Holland  
 Defoe's *General History of Trade*, etc.  
 Newspapers first stamped: the *Spectator* thus killed.
- 1714 Death of Anne and accession of George I.  
 Ministry of Lord Townshend and Walpole (Paymaster-General).  
 National Debt £52,000,000.  
 Defoe's *Mercator*, etc.
- 1715 Parliament dissolved. Whigs in a majority in the elections.  
 Flight of Bolingbroke.  
 Jacobite rising in Scotland and the West of England.  
 Walpole First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.  
 Oxford committed to the Tower. Bolingbroke and Ormond attainted.



- 1715 Six Jacobite members of Parliament arrested.  
Riot Act re-enacted and made perpetual.  
Addison's *Freeholder*.  
Pope's translation of the *Iliad* begun.  
Death of Louis XIV.
- 1716 Ministry of Lord Stanhope. Septennial Act.  
Dispersion of the insurgent army.  
Seven peers sent to the Tower.  
Execution of Lords Derwentwater and Kenmure.  
Death of Somers.  
Butler's *Letters to Dr. Clarke*.
- 1717 Triple Alliance between Britain, France, and Holland.  
Townshend dismissed. Walpole resigns, succeeded by Stanhope.  
Oxford acquitted.  
Bangorian Controversy. Convocation interdicted.
- 1718 Futile descent of Spanish soldiers in Scotland.  
Naval warfare with Spain; destruction of Spanish fleet  
by Admiral Byng. Bahama Islands taken.  
Halley discovers motions of fixed stars.  
Quadruple Alliance (the Emperor joining).  
Retirement of Addison.
- 1719 *Robinson Crusoe*.  
Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*.
- 1720 Failure of the Peerage Bill.  
South Sea Bubble burst.  
Walpole again Paymaster-General.  
Gibraltar attacked by Spain.  
Birth of Charles Edward, "the Young Pretender."  
Peace concluded with Spain.  
Thomson's *Winter* (*The Seasons* completed in 1728).  
Pope's *Moral Essays* begun.
- 1721 Death of Stanhope. Walpole First Minister.  
Rejoicings at Madrid over a victory in Morocco.  
Twelve Jews and Mohammedans burned as an *Auto da fé* in King Philip's presence.



- 1722 Dissolution of the Septennial Parliament: Elections favourable to Walpole.  
Death of Sunderland. Carteret Foreign Secretary.  
Bishop Atterbury sent to the Tower.  
Death of Marlborough.  
Last execution for witchcraft in Scotland, at Dornoch.  
Act to establish Workhouses.  
Use of printed calicoes forbidden.
- 1723 Atterbury banished.  
Bolingbroke pardoned and allowed to return.  
Flamsteed's *Historia Cœlestis Britannica* (3 vols. of astronomical observations).
- 1724 Excitement in Ireland over Wood's halfpence.  
Carteret appointed Lord-Lieutenant, Pelham taking his place as Secretary of State.  
Malt Tax riots in Scotland.  
Office of Secretary for Scotland abolished.  
*The Craftsman* established by Bolingbroke and Pulteney.  
Collins's *Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*.
- 1725 Walpole made Knight of the Bath.  
Alliance between Britain, France, and Prussia.  
Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*.  
*New Memoirs of Literature* (notices of books) begun.
- 1726 Walpole made Knight of the Garter.  
General Wade begins road-making in the Highlands.  
Collins's *Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered*.  
Butler's *Fifteen Sermons*.  
Voltaire comes to England.
- 1727 War with Austria and Spain.  
Siege of Gibraltar by Spain.  
Death of George I; accession of George II. Parliament dissolved.  
Civil List increased by £130,000, making it £830,000.  
National Debt £50,000,000.  
Gay's *Beggar's Opera*.  
Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.  
Death of Newton.



- 1728 Pope's *Dunciad*.  
 Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopædia* (2 vols. folio).  
*The Present State of the Republic of Letters* (notices of books) begun.
- 1729 Peace of Seville.  
 Middleton's *Letter from Rome*.  
 Lord Justice Raymond in the Woolston trial declares that "Christianity is part of the law of England."
- 1730 Freer exportation of American rice allowed.  
 Walpole and Townshend quarrel. Townshend resigns.  
 Tinplate first made in England (Pontypool).  
*Historia Literaria* (notices of books) begun.  
 Montesquieu visits England.  
 Oglethorpe's Gaol Reform.
- 1731 Treaty of Vienna.  
*Gentleman's Magazine* begun.  
 Pope's *Epistles* (1731-5).  
 Berkeley's *Minute Philosopher*.  
 Death of Defoe.
- 1732 Hogarth's *Modern Midnight Conversation*.
- 1733 Walpole's Excise Bill.  
Inroad on the Sinking Fund.  
 War of the Polish Succession. Family Compact between France and Spain.  
 Birmingham streets first lighted.  
 Pope's *Essay on Man*. His *Satires* begun.  
 Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress*.  
 Jethro Tull's *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*.
- 1734 General Election: Walpole retains majority.  
 Voltaire's *Lettres anglaises*.
- 1735 Bolingbroke withdraws to France.  
 Berkeley's *Analyst* and *Querist*.  
 Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*.  
 The Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*.
- 1736 Gin Act.  
 Porteous riots at Edinburgh.



- 1736 Mortmain Act.  
Attempt to repeal Test Act.  
Butler's *Analogy*.
- 1737 Walpole puts theatres under Lord Chamberlain.  
Death of Queen Caroline.  
Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*.
- 1738 Case of Jenkins's ear raised.  
Johnson's *London*.  
Wesley returns from Georgia.
- 1739 War declared against Spain.
- 1740 Food riots. New Jacobite association in Scotland.
- 1741 Elections go against Walpole.  
Richardson's *Pamela*.  
Hume's *Essays, Moral and Political*.
- 1742 Walpole created Earl of Orford. Resigns.  
Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*.  
Death of Halley.
- 1743 Ministry of Henry Pelham.  
Battle of Dettingen.  
Blair's *Grave*.
- 1744 Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination*.
- 1745 Death of Walpole.  
Death of Pope.  
Battle of Fontenoy.  
Charles Edward lands in Scotland; wins battle of Prestonpans; reaches Derby and retreats.
- 1746 Battles of Falkirk and Culloden.  
Collins's *Odes*.
- 1748 Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.  
Hume's *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*.  
Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*.  
Smollett's *Roderick Random*.  
Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*.



1749 Fielding's *Tom Jones*.

1750 National Debt £74,000,000. Acts of Parliament passed for better poor relief, for cleansing of streets, and for "keeping a nightly watch with the parish of St. Martin's in the Fields, in the liberties of the City of Westminster."

The Lord Mayor, an alderman, a judge, many lawyers, jurors, and others, died of jail fever contracted at the Old Bailey from Newgate.

1751 Death of Bolingbroke.

Gray's *Elegy*.

Hogarth's *Gin Alley*.

Fielding's pamphlet *On the late increase of Robbers*.



# Bolingbroke and Walpole

## CHAPTER I

### THE STRIFE OF DYNASTIES AND SECTS

Two hundred years ago, the outstanding political forces in England as in other countries of western Europe were those two correlatives : sectarian and dynastic sympathies and antipathies. That is to say, English political life was at once primitive in its pitch and sophisticated in its elements. The temper of civil antipathy was almost as raw and rude as it had been in some of the class strifes of ancient Rome ; but it was not a class antipathy. That political phase *had* appeared in earlier English history : it had been chronic in municipal life ;<sup>1</sup> on a larger scale it had come up in the risings of Wat Tyler and Jack Cade, in the teaching of John Ball, in the movement of the Lollards ; and it had flashed up with a new light among the following of Cromwell ; but it was always local, never a matter of general propaganda. Only in the Rebellion did conditions arise in which local activities had a chance of becoming general, through a blending of ideas and ideals ; and time was still lacking for anything like popular political education on lines of economic thought.

Some of the new phases of that period were indeed remarkable. What we can to-day recognize as the idea of philosophic anarchism was set forth by Overton ;<sup>2</sup> and an equally bold and novel doctrine of a common right to the use of the earth as planned by " the Creator, the spirit Reason," had been given out for the Levellers

<sup>1</sup> Cp. the author's *Evolution of States*, pp. 379, 393.

<sup>2</sup> *Id* p. 424.



by the pen of Winstanley ;<sup>1</sup> but it was impossible that in such an environment such doctrines should prosper. Ireton met them as doctrines of "natural right" have been met since, by insisting that the only rights are those constituted by law : Cromwell simply scouted them. That they found printed utterance and audience at all was due to the abnormal stimulus of the Rebellion, and to the new openings it gave for intellectual as well as for military originality. When simple republicanism collapsed, deeper doctrine necessarily disappeared. Not one Englishman in a thousand was capable of thinking on such lines. The spirit of class strife had accordingly been swallowed up in the spirit of sectarian strife, which on the royalist side thrived in the atmosphere of the Restoration, after having flourished greatly on the other under the Commonwealth.

Thus English political life at the beginning of the eighteenth century in some aspects resembled more that of Christian Imperial Rome and Byzantium than that of pagan Rome and Greece. The sectarian spirit, the element of religious hate, is a special psychological growth, tracing historically from the East, through the small hotbed of Jewry, to the Christian creed and church ; but it is recognizably generated in certain political conditions and a certain state of culture in all periods. Broadly speaking, it is the complement of absolutism. Wherever despotism controlled daily life, arresting the reactions of the earlier and freer tribal and civic State, the checked energies of union and strife ran in the channels of religion ; even as in unfree communities of one religion they run to factions—"Blacks and Whites," "Blues and Greens," "Hooks and Codfish" ; and in free States to political parties. In Assyria and Babylon before Israel,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. P. Gooch, *History of English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century*, 1898, pp. 216, 220 ; L. H. Behrens, *The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth*, 1906, pp. 76, 90, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Tiele, *Histoire comparée des anciennes religions égyptiennes et sémitiques*, French tr. 1882, p. 243.



in Egypt down to the Christian period, men passionate for Gods or cults as in the freer communities they did for the city, for plunder, for empire.

Entering into the life of Europe, largely in the persons of Orientals, when Roman Imperialism had prepared the way for it, the passion of creed is seen overlaying the simpler animal-political tendencies as if by a kind of hypnotism—the hypnotism of the Sacred Book, under whose spell the zeal with which the normal man backs his opinion is raised to the furor which recognizes in itself the voice of the supernatural. Pagan Romans, Greeks, and barbarians had warred on the spur of instincts which we may term primary, comparing as they do with the instinctive hostilities of animal species. But Christianity was not only in itself one cause for war the more, as between Christian and non-Christian rulers: it was a ready-made mechanism, first for the subjection and coercion of barbarian people by their kings,<sup>1</sup> and later for the evocation of their energies of strife when the normal channels were barred by regal control.

Once ingrained by the church, however, the passion of creed blended with all the other motives of strife and union. Some heresies can be seen to be stigmatized as such by reason of the economic interests of the priesthood;<sup>2</sup> others flourished on lines of race division, thus helping to break up the empire;<sup>3</sup> and in the Middle Ages the great movements of heresy and persecution were alike expressions of the economic bias of laity and clergy.<sup>4</sup> When, again, the growing strength of governments curtailed social strife, unless foreign war came in as a commuting force the religious passion, inseparable from faith, found new scope in general heresy, leading to general schism. Thus we see dissent spreading in England under Henry IV, Henry VIII, Elizabeth, and

<sup>1</sup> Cp. the author's *Short History of Christianity*, 2nd ed., pp. 168–72.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* pp. 197–204.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* pp. 150, 161–2.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* pp. 135, 168, 169, 197, 216, 228, 249.



## 22 THE STRIFE OF DYNASTIES AND SECTS

James ; and afresh under Charles II and James II ; while in France under Louis XIV and Louis XV the stress of foreign war favours indifferentism, to be followed by a great freethinking activity, under a repressive system, after the peace of Paris in 1763.

In the France of the later half of the sixteenth century, and the England and Germany of the first half of the seventeenth, none of them being yet nearly ripe for rationalism, the religious motive to strife reached its highest modern pitch, dominating and pervading or transmuting all other motives in virtue of the well-nigh Hebraic absorption of the northern peoples in the newly-felt fascination of the sectarian life. Thus the English Civil War became essentially a war of sects ;<sup>1</sup> and the fall of the Protectorate meant broadly that the most conservative of the Protestant sects won the upper hand by cohering, while the others were mutually frustrative. The great combining force on the royalist side was the dogma of the divinity of the king's hereditary status—a primitive kind of “taboo” which the pagan Romans had completely transcended under the Empire, and which the Church of Rome had alternately maintained as against rebels and repudiated when kings turned anti-papal. In England, under clerical hands, the notion swiftly rose to a new fanaticism. Only the rudest stress of sectarian interest within the State Church—the dilemma set up for it when the Catholic king went about to introduce a Catholic polity—caused the re-established dynasty to fall. After the Restoration, the divine right of the king, little heard of previously, had become practically the Church's chief dogma,<sup>2</sup> the reaction against Puritanism thus taking at once a royalist and a religious shape ; and while the sectarian aspect of the war had caused thoughtful and clever men to turn wearily or contemp-

<sup>1</sup> Buckle's thesis, that it was a war of classes, is true insofar as the sect-lines followed class lines. The real cleavage, however, was rather sectarian. Cromwell was expressly hostile to class motives.

<sup>2</sup> *Evolution of States*, pp. 440-44.



tuously away from theology,<sup>1</sup> the spirit of faction survived on the lines in question. When, again, the political turmoil of the reign of Charles II culminated in the adventure and the overthrow of the Monmouth expedition and the crushing of its promoters under James II, the checked political energies reverted as usual to the sectarian channels. Thus when James was expelled, the strain on the habits of the conservative sect and party, who had affirmed his sacrosanct right to reign, was so violent that a reaction was inevitable; and under William and Mary many of them lived in a state of semi-repentance for their spasm of self-preservation. So strong was the belief in hereditary divine right that the "warming-pan" story of the child smuggled in to pass as the royal babe was a positive asset in the debate.

If this and many previous vacillations of national feeling were to be considered apart from their causation, they might be held to prove an abnormal instability of character in the English people; and indeed no modern nation had collectively vacillated more. Under the Tudors it swung between Papalism and anti-Papalism four times, in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth: after the execution of Charles I, the majority—if there ever was a majority for the Parliament—reverted to royalism; after the Restoration, many became disaffected to Charles II; and all parties, later, underwent extreme changes of attitude in his reign, especially in the matter of the Popish Plot. It needed, again, the severest pressure from James II to rouse against him many who had sought his exclusion from the throne; and William was hardly crowned when Jacobite sentiment revived. But on scrutiny all such revulsions, in England as elsewhere, are found to stand for normal forces of social causation acting on average minds; and at the crisis under notice the ruling motive was one long ingrained in the popular culture.

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of States*, pp. 444–8.



## CHAPTER II

### FORMATION OF PARTIES

It belonged, however, to the sectarian motive to compound readily with the other passions, and to be as undignified as they. When James, aiming at the complete enfranchisement of Catholics, with a view to their ultimate supremacy, took the course of conciliating the persecuted Protestant dissenters, their ready compliance drove the alarmed churchmen to similar overtures. Those who a year before had been zealous persecutors strove to cajole their late victims, till it became hard to say what conscientious conviction had ever underlain either conformity or nonconformity. The semblance of moral superiority which belonged to the ground of action fell away like any other mere habit, under the due pressure of need and temptation. When, again, the seven bishops were put on trial for refusing to read the king's arbitrary Declaration of Indulgence, and were acquitted (1688), a common emotion of antipathy and sympathy drew together all sects of Protestants ; but when the emergency was past, and a Protestant king sat on the throne, the churchman was as bent as before on penalizing alike the Catholic and the dissenter, and the old hate of the ever-present Roundhead took the place of fear of the remoter Papist.

For a hundred years, religious life had meant a reciprocity of hate, each creed while in power persecuting the others. Queen Anne, the "wet nurse of the Church," as Horace Walpole called her, was so resentful of Dissent that when a deputation of nonconformist clergy went to congratulate her on her accession she received them in



frigid silence; though she was said to be so lax in her own devotions as to have morning prayers said in an adjoining room while she dressed. In the early days of George I, brutish riots, in which dissenting chapels were destroyed, expressed the zeal for the church felt by mobs in the Jacobite counties;<sup>1</sup> and at the time of the Union, the Episcopalians of Scotland—themselves savage persecutors in their day of power—were hated by their Presbyterian countrymen with a perfect hatred.<sup>2</sup> The English Presbyterians had been as zealous in tyranny as any; and not in a generation could the restored Church of England unlearn the appetite for revenge. Everywhere rancour reigned. Defoe has told us that in his youth (1683) his fellow-dissenters hoped for the success of the Turks against Vienna, and that when “he opposed and wrote against it” his reasoning “was taken very unkindly indeed.”<sup>3</sup> And when in 1702 Defoe published his strategical piece *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, a fairly literal exposition of the case of the hot High Churchmen against their *bêtes noires*, the zest with which many of them applauded put upon the others the absurd necessity of prosecuting Defoe for libellous misrepresentation. *Tantum religio.*

One of the clearest heads of that age, George Savile, Marquis of Halifax (d. 1695), who had played his part in most of its episodes, was fain to sum up on one line that “the several sorts of religion in the world are little more than so many spiritual monopolies: if their interests could be reconciled, their opinions would be so too”; and again that “most men’s anger about religion is as if two men should quarrel for a lady they neither of them cared for.”<sup>4</sup> But the deist devotee of Montaigne<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope’s *History of England*, 1713–1783, ch. iv.

<sup>2</sup> Lecky, *Hist. of England in the Eighteenth Cent.*, ed. 1892, ii. 277.

<sup>3</sup> Minto, *Daniel Defoe*, in “Men of Letters” series, 1879, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Political Thoughts and Reflections: Religion* (published with *A Character of King Charles the Second*, 1750).

<sup>5</sup> See his Letter to Charles Cotton, at the end of his posthumous *Miscellanies*, 1700.



would doubtless have admitted that the disputants cared a great deal to gratify their wills, their animosities to men who challenged their habits; and when he affirmed that "the people would not believe in God at all if they were not permitted to believe wrong in him," he hinted the whole fatality of religion in politics. A sacrosanct habit is a species of "property"; it is grown "proper" or personal to the devotee; and it needs a liberal education indeed to make him more tolerant of its impugnors than he would be of a challenge to his ownership of his goods and chattels. Toleration is either a gift of temper or a fruit of philosophy; and the gentry who legislated for England were far to seek in either sweetness or light.

The importance of toleration to the stability of the State was indeed too clear not to be urged by the wiser few. Spinoza in Holland, and afterwards Locke in England, put their hands to philosophic pleas for it, Spinoza in his fundamental negation of the entity of "will," which destroyed the chimera of "sinning against light"; Locke by his acute *reductio ad absurdum* of the plea that it is a duty to enforce what we believe to be the true religion.<sup>1</sup> But there remained the vital difficulty that men who could so reason failed to impress the zealots as having the religious temper. It is indeed the historical fact that the tolerant men were hardly ever "evangelical." King William himself was known to be a latitudinarian,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that Locke wrought out his doctrine of toleration in the clearest way as early as 1667, when he was a tutor at Oxford and the persecuting laws of the Restoration (1662-65) were new and actively enforced. (See his *Essay concerning Toleration*, printed in H. Fox Bourne's *Life of Locke*, 1876, i. 174-94.) His views seem to have been shaped by the influence of Owen, who represented the most enlightened Independents. (Fox Bourne, as cited, i. 72-8, 166-7.) But the theory had been before propounded by Chillingworth, Jeremy Taylor, and Milton.

<sup>2</sup> "His indifference to the forms of church government, and his being zealous for toleration, together with his cold behaviour towards the clergy, gave them generally very ill impressions of him." (Burnet, *Own Time*, B. V, end. Cp. Macaulay, *History*, Student's ed. i. 692.)



and he sought latitudinarians for his bishops. Tillotson, Wilkins, and Cumberland,<sup>1</sup> for instance, were rationalistic in their tone and practice; and Tillotson was constantly charged with Socinianism at the least.<sup>2</sup> Cromwell had been led rather by political necessity than by his inner light to insist on the indifference of the State to the creeds of its servants (provided they were Protestants), as he was led by financial expediency to protect the Jews. George Fox, lacking such leading, could not forgo the joy of interrupting the services of which he disapproved. There is apparently no normal access to the principle of tolerance by the path of emotional faith:<sup>3</sup> the intellectual approach is by way of rational doubt or of indifference: the common learning of the lesson is a matter either of reluctant recognition of counter-pressures or of mere acquiescence in a toleration that has been won. Halifax put the case with his usual felicity when he wrote that "If men would think more they would act less: the greatest part of the business of the world is the effect of not thinking. Most men put their reason out to service to their will: the master and the man are perpetually falling out."<sup>4</sup> But he knew better than to urge such precepts on churchmen by way of getting them to leave dissenters alone. As it was, his deism was divined and charged against him; and Locke was promptly accused of promoting atheism.

The average human material, in short, was too bad,

<sup>1</sup> The first important English writer on ethics on naturalistic lines after Hobbes. Cp. Buckle, 3-vol. ed. i. 425. Macaulay (ii. 260) tells of his unexpected appointment.

<sup>2</sup> See Tillotson's preface to Wilkins' posthumous work on Natural Religion for a sample of his rationalizing tone.

<sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy that Procopius, who denounced the theological strifes of Byzantium, used the language of a non-scriptural theist (*De bello Gothico*, i. 3) and has been denounced accordingly (Gibbon, note to ch. 47). There is accordingly reason to surmise that those Byzantines who in the iconoclastic period argued for toleration (Finlay, ed. Tozer, ii. 97) were of a rationalistic cast.

<sup>4</sup> *Political Thoughts and Reflections*, ed. 1750, p. 178.



the main forces at work too irrational, to permit of any speedy success of the doctrine of toleration in England. When Locke wrote his first Letter on Toleration,<sup>1</sup> in 1685, the Dutch had already gone far towards his ideal, not on any acceptance of the deep doctrine of Spinoza, but as a result of (a) the felt evils of intolerance, of (b) growing doubt, and of (c) the sheer multiplicity of sects.<sup>2</sup> In Holland, however, there was no such preponderant Church as the Anglican, and no such monarchic power as in England had made common cause with the Church. Thus the Act of Toleration of 1689, to promote which Locke published in English his first letter, was at best a restraint on persecution, protecting the great majority of dissenters<sup>3</sup> by various compromises, but leaving schism unhealed. It was the king's wish to add to toleration "comprehension," and to make all Protestants eligible for public office; but, as Macaulay has it, he came too late for the first and too early for the second.<sup>4</sup> The Comprehension Bill had to be abandoned, not on account of doctrinal difficulties but partly because of sheer clerical fanaticism for ritual, and partly because a number of the Presbyterian ministers of the time, being considerably better off as popular dissenters with rich flocks than they would be as churchmen, were not anxious to be "comprehended."<sup>5</sup> Thus the sectarian outs and ins

<sup>1</sup> Written in Latin in 1685. Published in English in 1689.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. *Short Hist. of Freethought*, 3rd ed. ii. 135-8; Halifax's *Letter to a Dissenter* (in 1700 ed. of *Miscellanies*) p. 27; and Anthony Collins' *Discourse of Freethinking*, 1713, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> "It is true that the Toleration Act recognized persecution as the rule, and granted liberty only as the exception. But it is equally true that the rule remained in force only against a few hundreds of Protestant dissenters, and that the benefit of the exceptions extended to hundreds of thousands." (Macaulay, ch. xi.)

<sup>4</sup> Ch. xi, Student's ed. i. 692. A considerable measure of comprehension (the absorption in the church of many Presbyterians, some of whom became bishops) had, however, been effected by express agreement at the Restoration—a circumstance Macaulay does not mention (cp. Fox Bourne, as cited, i. 170-1). But far more were driven out and persecuted than were taken in.

<sup>5</sup> Macaulay, ed. cited, i. 703.



were left marked off as different social and religious species, and as such sure factors of future strife.

More intelligent motives of strife did not exist, with the partial exception of the reasons for and against the war with France ; and it would not be easy to underrate the moral and mental standards of public life in any class. To that day indeed belongs Locke's treatise *Of Civil Government* (1689); but the constructive part of that essay—the weightiest practical argument for constitutional government thus far produced—was nearly as much above the plane of English politics as the more theoretic treatises of Harrington and Sidney. The shattering despotism of Cromwell had prepared the degradation of political life which visibly set in with the Restoration, when “those persons who made politics their business were perhaps the most corrupt part of the corrupt society.”<sup>1</sup> Only the sobering danger of 1688 had forced prudence on the parliamentary majority : when the danger was past, every reckless passion and sinister interest resumed play ; and the political summary of the age is given in the grim saying of William, that if the king of England had enough good appointments to enrich all who sought them, the names of Whig and Tory would soon disappear.<sup>2</sup> And yet the parties so named battled with a stress of malice that could hardly have been heightened by the intensest difference of conviction. As was said by a cosmopolitan who had served in the English army, if the ideas held of each other by Whigs and Tories had been true, one would have lived in England in less security than among the savages of America.<sup>3</sup>

The very names of the parties told of a vulgar levity and a puerile pugnacity of temper, originating as they did in popular epithets of which the use could be traced

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay, ch. ii, ed. cited, i. 89. Compare Clarendon, *Continuation of the Life*, in 1-vol. ed. of *History*, 1843, p. 1004.

<sup>2</sup> De Cize, *Histoire du Whigisme et du Torisme*, 1718, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* préface.



only to Scotch and Irish provincial feuds.<sup>1</sup> Originally thrown out in the fashion of schoolboys, they met the psychological needs of the nation. In that atmosphere self-seeking motives and irrational doctrines prospered alike; and the two central dogmas round which strife raged, the sacredness of the Church and the sacredness of the hereditary succession, were at once mystic watch-words for the many and symbols of self-interest for the more calculating few. What we may fitly term superstition—something away from the primary or quasi-universal grounds of sympathy and antipathy—was the ruling passion. In terms of superstition, sect hated sect; in terms of superstition, Cavalier had hated Roundhead, and Jacobite now hated Hanoverian. Only the folly of the French king in proclaiming the Jacobite heir as king of England on his father's death had held the bulk of the Tory party to William's side; the spirit of national animosity serving for the moment to override the spirit of dynastic superstition. Englishmen would have no king of Louis's choosing. But the dynastic superstition survived the decisive outbreak of temper, and remained a variable quantity, according to circumstances. These were the main political forces with which Walpole and Bolingbroke, the two typical statesmen of the early

<sup>1</sup> For "Whig" there are three etymologies: (1) the word "whey" as an epithet for the Puritans in Scotland (North's *Examen*, 1740, p. 321); (2) the word "whiggam," said to have been used by the carriers of South-western Scotland in urging their horses, whence the name "whigamors' raid," applied to a march of Covenanters on Edinburgh in 1648 (Burnet, *History of his Own Time*, ed. 1838, p. 26; Burton, *History of Scotland*, vi. 419); (3) "whig," said to be a Scotch name for certain small caps worn by Scotch Puritans (De Cize, as cited, p. 21). The nickname "Tory" is traced without dispute to Ireland, where it was given to a species of bandits, who were taken as typical royalists. Both names, as is well known, came into English use in 1679, in the wild strife over the proposal to exclude the Duke of York from the succession; and from 1688 they were complacently borne by the two factions. The folk-words "mob" and "sham," as Macaulay reminds us, date from the same year.



eighteenth century, had to deal. And the mere "accidents" of monarchic succession under the regimen of the monarchic superstition brought it about that for two whole generations political leaders and not monarchs were the prime movers in English affairs.

William could and did govern, though under desperate difficulties, shaping the organization of the Cabinet to his needs. Anne was in comparison impotent; and under her the epoch of the great parliamentarians began; to continue through the reigns of the first and second Georges, in virtue of their fears and their lucky inability to speak the tongue of the nation to whose throne they had succeeded;<sup>1</sup> and, after that ample rooting time, to subsist for posterity. In Clarendon's time, a "first minister" was something specially odious to the bulk of the English people, as Richelieu and Mazarin had been to the French; and it was the sheer pressure of circumstances that forced the institution on them. It cannot be too strongly insisted on that the course of English political development is explicable only in terms of the series of accidents under notice. Had James II been content to remain an Anglican, he could probably have built up a regal power as inflexible as that of Louis XIV. Had William lived for another thirty years, he in turn might well have established what in our current vocabulary would be an "unconstitutional" monarchy. It is by virtue of no innate English "faculty" for parliamentary evolution that we have attained a parliamentary regimen. Monarchism had hypnotized the England of the end of the seventeenth century about as completely as it had done Spain and France in their turn. It was the accidents of James's infatuation, William's Dutch nationality, his early death, Anne's feebleness, and the incapacity of the first Georges to speak English, combined with their sense of instability, that permitted a

<sup>1</sup> George I could not converse in English at all: and he and Walpole consulted in dog-Latin. George II spoke English, but with a strong foreign accent.



vigorous parliamentary development in England, in constitutional union with Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

It should be added that the clause in William's Act of Settlement (inserted against his will) providing that no foreigner should sit in the Privy Council, was of great value later in excluding the rapacious German courtiers of George I, and as fencing the Cabinet from the king.

Up to the death of Anne, the forces of the situation, despite violent fluctuations, seemed to hang in substantial balance. The two possible successors in 1714 were the son of the last Stuart king, and King George of Hanover, the heir in the Protestant line, descended from the daughter of James I. The legitimate principle pointed emphatically to the former, whose accession would have been almost a matter of course if only he had not been a Catholic. Even as it was, a little more readiness, energy, and cohesion among his partisans might have won him the throne ; so strong had the monarchic superstition become. On the other side there was the most absolute recognition of the monarchic principle ; and no practical politician, and hardly any theorist, dreamt of a republic. As little conceivable was the success of any new "usurper." Men had indeed feared that Marlborough, at the height of his fame and power, might aim at a Protectorate, in imitation of Cromwell ; but the very precedent which had created the apprehension had really made it needless. Cromwell's rise to power was the end of a series of unforeseen contingencies ; and for politicians to realize that Marlborough *might* tread the same path meant on their part a frame of mind which made the path impossible to him had he sought it. England must needs have a "hereditary" king, however fantastically the hereditary principle was to be applied.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Macaulay, ed. cited, i. 333, 652, 660, with Lord Morley, *Walpole*, p. 49, and Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. 1892, i., ch. ii.



### CHAPTER III

## FORMATION OF GOVERNMENTS

THEOLOGICAL theory having fixed the principle of kingship, practice was to settle the problem of the control of the kingship by constitutional government—the special contribution of England to the political systems of history. The solution emerged in the English way, fortuitously, out of the party situation developed under William and Anne, and further under George I, and finally crystallized, as it were, by the personality of Walpole. Contrary to the common account of it, the solution was not planned. It came about.

The idea, if we credit Macaulay and Green, originated with the protean Earl of Sunderland,<sup>1</sup> one of the most remarkable figures of his age, successively a Charles's man, a James's man, and a William's man; a Protestant, a Catholic, and a Protestant again, all the while believing in no creed, but finally "rendering to the cause of liberty and of the Protestant religion services of which it is difficult to overrate either the wickedness or the utility."<sup>2</sup> He "had made Bonrepaux shudder by denying the existence of a God, and had at the same time won the heart of James by pretending to believe in transubstantiation."<sup>3</sup> Such was the kind of statesman who best floated in the age of fanaticism and faction; and according to Macaulay it was he who, experienced in the management of faction under the Stuarts, counselled

<sup>1</sup> The second Earl (d. 1702), to be distinguished from his son, who figures under Queen Anne and George I. In the index to Torrens's *History of Cabinets* they are treated as one person.

<sup>2</sup> Macaulay, ch. xx: ii. 453.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 454.



William to govern by way of giving a "marked preference" to one faction for the time being; Parliament being a mere ferment of self-will which did not know what it wanted, but was always ready to thwart the king.<sup>1</sup>

Macaulay, who gives no references, is evidently proceeding on Burnet, who, however, merely says (1) that William, dissatisfied with his ministers (in November 1693), dismissed the Tory Nottingham, and, after some trouble, persuaded the Whig Shrewsbury to take his place; and (2) that the king was persuaded to take this course by Sunderland, "who had more credit with him than any Englishman ever had." Sunderland "had brought the king to this change of councils by the prospect he gave him of the ill condition his affairs were in if he did not entirely both trust and satisfy those who, in the present conjuncture, were the only party that both could and would support him." William accordingly put the Whigs in a majority in the commission of the lieutenancy for the City of London and elsewhere; and "they were also brought into many places of trust and profit; so that the king put his affairs chiefly into their hands; yet so, that no Tory who had expressed zeal or affection for the government was turned out."<sup>2</sup>

The authority, even so far as it goes, is not overwhelming; and neither Torrens in his *History of British Cabinets* nor Cooke in his *History of Party* even mentions the matter. Neither does Hallam, who indicates his distrust of Burnet's previous statement that it was Nottingham who had set William against the Whigs by representing that many of their leading men were republicans.<sup>3</sup> And the sufficient reason for discounting Burnet's story of Sunderland's persuasion is that there was nothing new in the suggestion. As elaborated by Macaulay and Green, the story is a sample of the common

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay, ch. xx, p. 456.

<sup>2</sup> *History of his Own Time*, ed. 1838, pp. 598-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Const. Hist.*, 10th ed. iii. 122.



practice—which we shall find specially illustrated in the case of the panegyrics on Burke—of ascribing to one man the origination of a proposal or a precept which had previously occurred to many.

As early as 1690, Shrewsbury had written categorically to William: “I wish you could have established your party upon the moderate and honest principled men of both factions; but, as there is a necessity of declaring, I shall make no difficulty to own my sense that your majesty and the government are much more safe depending upon the whigs, whose designs, if any against, are improbable and remoter, than with the tories, who, many of them, questionless, would bring in King James. . . .”<sup>1</sup> And in the very year of William’s resort to the Whigs, we find a Committee of the whole House of Commons resolving: “That his majesty be humbly advised, for the necessary support of his government, to employ in his councils and management of his affairs such persons only whose principles oblige them to stand by him and his right against the late King James, and all other pretenders whatsoever.”<sup>2</sup> And the king had already made Somers attorney-general in 1692. The priority in counsel assigned to Sunderland thus entirely disappears.

Even Burnet’s account, be it observed, like the Commons’ resolution, does not propose a *party ministry*. And naturally so, because at that time parties were variously divided, some leading Whigs having intrigued with James, while certain leading Tories were anti-Jacobite, though most of them were in touch with the exile.<sup>3</sup> The principle put was the very simple one that the king should employ willing and faithful instruments. When, then, Macaulay speaks of a “noiseless revolution,”

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, as cited, note *e*, citing the *Shrewsbury Papers*, 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 126, citing *Commons Journals*, January 11, 1692–3.

<sup>3</sup> Hallam, iii. 123–6. It is probable, as Hallam suggests, that Godolphin and Carmarthen (Danby) were playing a part in order to know what the Jacobites were plotting; and the same plea may surely be made for Shrewsbury, though Hallam does not entertain it. Russell, like Marlborough, was simply traitorous.



amounting to an introduction of the modern principle of a homogeneous ministry, "which began about the close of 1693, and was completed about the close of 1696," he overstates the case. Even if at the close of 1696 "all the *principal* servants of the Crown were Whigs,"<sup>1</sup> by the same authority, "at the beginning of 1699 there ceased to be a ministry; and years elapsed before the servants of the Crown and the representatives of the people were again joined in an union as harmonious as that which had existed from the general election of 1695 to the general election of 1698. The anarchy lasted, with some short intervals of composedness, till the general election of 1705."<sup>2</sup>

And Macaulay leaves it in doubt whether William finally dismissed his leading Whig ministers in a revulsion of feeling against them—suggesting that Sunderland had poisoned the king's ear<sup>3</sup>—when they were slow to resist the demand for disbandment of the army, or whether the king unwillingly made concessions to the opposition in the Commons.<sup>4</sup> "He did not yet perceive that the true way to escape from his difficulties was to form an entirely new ministry possessing the confidence of the majority which had, in the late session, been found so unmanageable."<sup>5</sup> Naturally, for no ministry, of one mind, could have possessed that confidence.

In point of fact, it was not till the period of fixed parliamentary majorities that party ministries were possible; and the creation of such was rather dictated

<sup>1</sup> Todd (*Parl. Government in England*, ed. Spencer Walpole, 1892, i. 58) says the 1696 ministry was "exclusively Whig."<sup>2</sup> This is inaccurate.

<sup>2</sup> Macaulay, ch. xxiv, p. 710.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* pp. 701-2.

<sup>4</sup> Another authority pronounces that when the Whig ministers "refused to defend him against the general demand that he should disband his Dutch guards, William withdrew his confidence, and made a step towards the Tories"<sup>2</sup>—who also had opposed him. (Cooke, *History of Party*, 1836, i. 534.)

<sup>5</sup> Macaulay, as last cited, p. 717.



by spontaneous party feeling than prescribed by either kings or counsellors. William veered between Whigs and Tories for various reasons, not now to be ascertained. When he dissolved the Convention Parliament in 1690, the step "cost him the hearts of those who had made him king."<sup>1</sup> After he had turned again towards the Whigs in 1693, the death of the Queen in 1694 naturally tended to draw him closer to them, now that his one prop of "divine right" had gone.<sup>2</sup> But again he turned away from them. In the words of another historian, "government by Cabinet was not a cunning device aforethought, or announced as a discovery on or about a particular day in the calendar."<sup>3</sup> The fact that William negotiated the Partition Treaty without consulting his Whig ministers in 1698 is the proof that his Whig Ministry was not a ministry in the modern sense. Yet Green, following Burnet and Macaulay, outgoes both in his statement of the case, and then qualifies his position as did Macaulay.

It is after telling how Parliament was incorrigibly corrupt, jealous, fickle, and factious, that Green makes the claim: "Nothing better proves the inborn political capacity of the *English mind* than that it should at once have found a simple and effective solution of such a difficulty as this." In the very next sentence he puts it that "the credit of the solution belongs to a man whose political character was of the lowest type." And on the next page he confesses, as needs must, that the solution was *not* found "at once." "It was only slowly and tentatively that he [William] ventured to carry it out in practice."<sup>4</sup> In simple truth, he never ventured to do so.

When popular history is written in this airy fashion, it is well to be clear as to the facts. Precisely because

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, iii. 122, note.

<sup>2</sup> Cooke, *History of Party*, i. 528-32.

<sup>3</sup> Torrens, *History of British Cabinets*, 1894, i. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Short History*, ed. 1881, pp. 683-4.



the throne was insecure, and because he wished to control policy, William could not venture on governing purely through the Whig faction, as Sunderland is said to have advised. As Cooke records, following Rapin's *Dissertation on the Whigs and Tories*, "William's great design was to unite the two factions, and form a single ministry from the moderate men of each; a design excellent in theory, but difficult, perhaps impossible, in practice."<sup>1</sup> It was indeed impossible to unite the factions, but not quite so difficult to govern by a combination of moderates; and that was the normal policy of William, who "belonged to neither faction, who loved neither, who hated neither, and who, for the accomplishment of a great design, wished to make use of both."<sup>2</sup> And Anne's policy was perforce very much the same; though her High Church prejudices made her lean to the Tories, and moved her to exclude the Whig chiefs from her new Privy Council at her accession.

When, in 1698, recalcitrant Whig members joined with Tories in demanding disbandment of the army, William's substantially Whig Ministry gave him only reluctant support, and failed to defeat the resolution moved by Harley (a discontented Whig turned into a Tory leader), compelling the dismissal of the Dutch Guards, William, at first strongly moved to retire to Holland, accepted the situation; and in 1699 began to dismiss the ministers who had failed him. Sunderland and Montague were replaced by Rochester and Godolphin; and in 1700 Somers had to give up the seals. The principle that ministries should conform to the strength of parties in the Commons was thus being established perforce.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Party*, i. 511.

<sup>2</sup> Macaulay, ch. xiv, ii. 75.



## CHAPTER IV

### BOLINGBROKE AND TORYISM

It was into the new Parliament of 1701 that Robert Walpole and Bolingbroke—then only Henry St. John—entered almost simultaneously. Their first experiences were certainly not calculated to form their minds to sober schemes of policy, or to excite their respect for parliamentary ideals. On the point of the Partition Treaties,<sup>1</sup> which Somers had opposed, but to which he set the great seal at the king's command, factious prosecutions were started by Tories in the Commons against Somers, Portland, Orford and Montague, only to break down before the resistance of the Lords. Popular anger at factious tactics expressed itself in the historic "Kentish Petition," issuing from the Quarter Sessions of Maidstone, with the signatures of the chairman, justices, and many freeholders; whereupon the Tory majority in the Commons fiercely debated the matter as an insult to Parliament, and the five gentlemen who presented the Petition were taken in custody; an act which elicited another Petition of constitutional criticism and protest, drawn up by Daniel Defoe, unsigned, and ending with the words: "Our name is Legion, for we are many." At the close of the session, the inevitably liberated five from Kent were publicly fêted.

Upon that minor tempest followed historic events. The death of the only surviving son of Princess Anne (1700) necessitated a new Act of Settlement (1701), settling the crown, at need, on the only remaining heir who held the Protestant faith, the Electress Sophia of Hanover. William now proceeded (July) to form his new Grand

<sup>1</sup> See below, Chapter XIII.



Alliance to prevent the succession of the grandson of Louis XIV to the crown of Spain under the king of Spain's will (1700), and to force the evacuation of the Netherlands. In September, 1701, James II died at St. Germain's; and Louis, refusing all compromise, straightway acknowledged his son as king of England. Secure in the popular resentment of this defiance, William again dissolved his Parliament (November); and his appeal for national support elicited a Whig majority. It was an age of many and swift swings of the pendulum.

Parliament having substantially supported the policy of war, on March 7, 1702, William signed the Act of Attainder against the Pretender; and on March 8th he died. It was under Queen Anne, who, guided by Marlborough, already the commander of William's forces, followed William's policy, that the new war began—the historic war in which the Elector of Hanover, the future king of England, and (in consideration of being formally recognized as king of Prussia) the Elector of Brandenburg, joined with Austria, Holland, England and the Elector Palatine in a Grand Alliance against France. The new reign entailed a new election—the third in two years—and this time the Tories had a great majority, so that the "Whig war" was being carried on by a mainly Tory administration, with Godolphin, the moderate though High Church Tory, at the head. Harley, who had been chosen Speaker in all three Parliaments of 1701–2, retaining that office, became Secretary of State in 1704, "under some pressure from Marlborough." Anne in her turn naturally held by the ideal of mixing the parties in the ministry; and Harley, the Tory Whig, paired well with Godolphin, the half-Whig Tory. In the same year St. John became Secretary for War, taking, like Harley, the place of a discontented Tory who had resigned. That administration has been described as the last, before the reign of George III, formed on the principle of the sovereign's free choice of ministers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stebbing, *Some Verdicts of History Reviewed*, 1887, p. 134.



St. John had rapidly come to the front in parliamentary life by speeches traditionally famed for their extraordinary brilliance and eloquence,<sup>1</sup> which ran largely to demands for the impeachment of the Whigs in respect of William's secret Partition Treaties, and for the reduction of the war on the English side to a purely naval one—the common Tory position. Such a leader of the pack had a delighted following among the High Church Tories, to whom St. John's known irreligion was no offence. His advocacy of the Occasional Conformity Act, a measure of gross persecution, won him a credit that no amount of orthodox faith could have gained for him. But Harley, the uncongenial leader of the general Tory combination in the Commons, saw in St. John's elevation to office precisely a means of weakening the High-Church section, whose violence he disliked and feared, as a constant source of commotion and civil strife. The opponent of England's share in the land war accordingly became a member of the War Ministry; and the unscrupulous freethinking champion of High Churchism became the colleague of the half-hearted Tory leader who secretly sought to thwart High Church schemes.<sup>2</sup>

Their incompatibilities, their cross-purposes, their quarrels when both had become peers, form a chapter of literary history, embodied in the letters and journals of their friend Swift, whose vain task it was to reconcile them. Both had come to Toryism as outsiders, both being grandsons of zealous Puritans; but Oxford's was the course of a man selling himself and caring above all things for the price; Bolingbroke's that of a man seeking at any sacrifice of principle to wield power and to "lead the times."<sup>3</sup> In their different ways, they signaled

<sup>1</sup> Pitt, who derived his estimate from his father, ranked together as the most to be regretted spoils of time the lost books of Livy and Tacitus, a Latin tragedy, and a speech by Bolingbroke.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Harrop, *Bolingbroke: A Political Study and Criticism*, 1884, pp. 24–30.

<sup>3</sup> Shaftesbury draws striking portraits of the two. See the author's ed. of the *Characteristics*, ii. 260–2.



the primitive, almost barbaric pitch of the political life of the time, in which half the nation looked with dislike on its Dutch king, with his costly Continental wars, yet could not face the risk of recalling the unseated dynasty in the male line. The young St. John, grandson of an austere Puritan and son of a Puritan mother and a libertine father, biased by juvenile experience<sup>1</sup> against the Whig connection which gave him the family seat for Wootton Bassett, turned towards the Tory faction almost as spontaneously as the young Walpole, zealous Whig son of a zealous Whig father, joined *his* natural associates. Harley, who had been in Parliament since 1689 without meeting the preferment on which he had some right to count at the king's hands, was equally prepared for a Tory connection,<sup>2</sup> but much less likely to carry it far. To him, Bolingbroke's reckless and unscrupulous policy of playing for High Church support by persecuting dissenters must have been always repellent, as making impossible the stable system of moderate Tory supremacy for which he schemed.

Both men, by planning for a strictly party system of government, gave the cue and the example for the system of party government which Walpole later made the standing form of British administration. Harley approached the problem on lines which seem to have given Bolingbroke the notion which he later developed in his *Idea of a Patriot King*—that of surrounding the crown with dutiful ministers who would do its behests; but Harley certainly contemplated what Bolingbroke did not propose—the due guidance of the crown by its ministers. In the case of Anne he might well have hoped to achieve this. At first he had co-operated with the Whigs in the ministry or behind it; but when, after the election of 1705 had given the Whigs a substantial majority, he found that they aimed at supremacy, he

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Sichel, *Bolingbroke and His Times*, i. (1901) 146; and Stanhope, *History of England from the Peace of Utrecht*, ch. i.

<sup>2</sup> Sichel, as cited, p. 67.



began in his furtive way to scheme (1707) to achieve by "bedchamber" intrigue that special control of the Queen which was necessary to his success. This was at first a complete failure, Harley and St. John being together dismissed from office in 1708 on the resolute stand taken by Marlborough and Godolphin;<sup>1</sup> and not till 1710 did they return. It was thereafter that their strifes developed into bitterness, Bolingbroke (made Viscount in 1712) finally attaining complete mastery and ejecting his alienated colleague.

What Bolingbroke achieved during the latter part of his ten years' career as a leader of a faction in Parliament was to develop the ideal of party rule in the interests not so much of Toryism as of his own ascendancy, though he played for party power by the most unscrupulous catering to party passion. Certainly he spared no toil to be an efficient administrator: Swift was as much impressed by his intensity of application as Burleigh had been by that of Raleigh, who could "labour terribly." Marlborough valued him as a brain, and urged him to accept office. In the great contemporary crisis of foreign policy, it is now generally agreed, he showed signal sagacity and practical skill, albeit his inspiration was primarily his *parti pris* against the policy of the Whigs. But in matters of national government he was never more than a masterful egotist seeking power by means of faction, and thus fomenting faction for the future. The Union with Scotland, the greatest constructive measure in the domestic politics of the period, stands in no way to his credit. That measure, planned for by James I, by Cromwell, by Commissions under Charles II, and by William III, had always been postponed by reason of the unwillingness of English traders to allow free trade to Scotland; and it was only when the strifes arising out of the Scottish Darien scheme were developing a new and intense hostility to England in the northern kingdom that Godolphin, Montague and Marlborough decided to

<sup>1</sup> Burnet, *Own Time*, ed. 1838, pp. 821-2



make the necessary concessions. The English framer of the Peace of Utrecht was indeed a man capable of comprehensive design ; but pacification at home was no part of his concern.

His position as leader of the party of the Church and of persecution was false, to begin with ; and his relations with Harley were strained solely by his personal impatience of the other's cautious tactics and personality, never by a genuine political concern or a public-spirited dissatisfaction. He complains that his own transfer to the House of Lords had been carried in such a manner as to make it a punishment, not a reward ;<sup>1</sup> but had he had any political cause or principle deeply at heart he would not have accepted the transfer. He wrote<sup>2</sup> of the "fatal irresolution, inherent to the Stuart race," displayed by Anne towards Oxford. He himself was in the worse case of having no aim worth being resolute for, when the hope that Anne would declare for her brother was ended by her death.

A schedule of the acts of policy of Bolingbroke will serve to bring out in high relief the forces of the times and the ideas which primed them. On his own showing, he chose his side because he thought it essentially the stronger. The Tory party was homogeneous, consisting mainly of the landed interest ; while the Whigs, plied in one way under Charles II and in another under William, were "still so weak as to lean for support on the Presbyterians and the other sectaries, on the Bank and the other corporations, on the Dutch and the other allies."<sup>3</sup> It was natural to think that the Whigs would therefore go to pieces as the Roundheads had done. It was held that permanent power must easily be engrossed by the Tories, and that they must "soon become too considerable

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Windham*, p. 31. He bitterly resented being made a mere Viscount when he coveted an earldom, and when Harley himself had been made Earl.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 21.



not to make our terms in all events which might happen afterwards : concerning which," adds Bolingbroke, "to speak truly, I believe few or none of us had any very settled resolution." This was the situation in 1710, when the Tories came into power on the wave of orthodox fanaticism, stirred by the prosecution of Sacheverell ; an episode which remains for us the most dramatic sign the period yields of its ruling passion, its superstitious folly.

In his early tenure of office, 1704-8, Bolingbroke had at first figured with Harley as a moderate Tory, co-operating like him with Whig colleagues ; till his collusion with Harley in the typical "bedchamber" intrigue for Tory supremacy (1707) brought about his ejection (1708) along with his chief. Then more intrigue, knitting up distinctly Tory faction as above described in Bolingbroke's words, with the prospect he indicates of ultimate triumph, which triumph, however, was suddenly thrust upon the intriguers by the Sacheverell explosion.

Henry Sacheverell, D.D., chaplain of St. Saviour's, Southwark, a blatant Tory priest, once the college friend of the diffident Addison, delivered sermon after sermon indicting the Whig Government as persecuting the Church and violating the divine law in regard to the succession. The crowning discourse, entitled "The Perils of False Brethren," was officially preached, obviously by official connivance, before the Lord Mayor<sup>1</sup> in St. Paul's on the day of thanksgiving in commemoration of William's landing, and amounted to waving the banner of divine right and hooting the representatives of the Revolution. The hooting was in the taste of the period—a tissue of rodomontade, readable only by kindred zealots. Men of all parties have long agreed that Sacheverell was a man lacking alike wit, sense, and knowledge, possessing not a single desirable intellectual quality save courage. He was the better fitted to be the hero of a religious mob

<sup>1</sup> To whom it was dedicated when published immediately afterwards.



of all classes when the Government unwisely elected to prosecute him for seditious libel. He had alluded to Godolphin, the Whig-Tory Lord Treasurer, under the label of Volpone; and the Lord Treasurer, as sometimes happens to cool men,<sup>1</sup> was stung to vengeance by this one attack after letting a thousand pass unnoticed.

The young Walpole, already astute and already a minister, was averse to prosecution, but did what he could, in a conventional fashion,<sup>2</sup> as the advocate of his colleagues in the pleadings before the House of Lords. And by the current political canons of the day Sacheverell richly deserved sentence. The Ministry were indeed justified in arguing later that his impudent and ostentatious defiance of the established situation forced them to proceed against him. But no theoretic necessity would have moved them to their course could they have foreseen the astonishing outbreak of fanaticism it evoked. The storm was as surprising to them as it is to us to-day; and at this distance of time it is difficult to doubt that, despite the opposition of most of the bishops, the organization of the Church must have been systematically used to raise it.<sup>3</sup> All that was at once stupid and passionate in England, the ill-educated clergy, the uneducated squirearchy, the besotted peasantry, bullied to church, the

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough, who was distinguished for his self-possession, "complained to Harley and St. John, in terms of positive anguish," of the attacks on him in the Press. (Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, small ed. i. 133, citing Coxe.)

<sup>2</sup> *The Tryal of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 1710, pp. 90-4.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Jenks, in his lucid essay on Walpole (Methuen, 1894) first puts it (p. 17) that "public opinion, always ready in England to rise in favour of a man apparently contending for freedom of speech and opinion, was wholly in favour of the prisoner." The compliment to English public opinion is excessive, and on the next page Professor Jenks credits the Church with its real influence in the matter. Money was systematically spent, too, by the Tory faction in promoting the pro-Church disturbances, in London and elsewhere. (*Memoirs of Queen Anne*, 1729, p. 68.) It appears that the younger clergy, unchastened by the near memory of civil strife, were most active on the side of the Church. (*Id.* p. 60.



church-going and dissenter-hating middle-class, and the then numerous species of Conservative working man, the town artisan or nondescript who hated the Whig precisians, swore by the Church, and was against the advent of a German king—all combined to swell the mindless roar of acclamation for the “martyr” priest who held by his canonical homilies,<sup>1</sup> and to menace his prosecutors. A sentence of mere suspension proved the intimidated temper of the House of Lords and stimulated to fresh political action the Tory organization which the case had engendered; and at the next triennial election, which fell six months afterwards, the Whigs were beaten. In due course their Ministry, including Godolphin, was dismissed (though the modern principle in these matters was of course not yet established), and a strictly Tory Government was formed.

Surprised as the Whigs were, the catastrophe was perfectly in keeping with their own political scheme. Theirs was not a system of rational principle, in which such a convulsion would be as irrelevant, so to say, as an earthquake: they too held by the monarchic superstition, and were fain to conjure with it after perforce resisting it, turning it to popular account by associating Toryism with Popery. It was in the nature of the situation that the deniers of divine right sought to have their king in turn hedged by divinity; and the doctrine of the Church which Sacheverell turned against them would have seemed very good in their eyes if it had only been turned against the Pretender. It was the day of clique feuds in terms of ideas almost on the plane of the circus-factions of old Byzantium; and the opposition animals had got their turn to be uppermost. Of course, the reaction did not wholly represent a sincere or even a manufactured fanaticism: much of the voting must have signified the sheer calculation of the colourless people

<sup>1</sup> “The homilies are so much more vehement against resistance than Sacheverell was, that it would have been awkward to pass a rigorous sentence upon him.” (Hallam, iii. 208, *note*.)



who were intent mainly on being on the winning side—a type perhaps never more numerous than in the England of that period, when there was so little in the way of rational grounds to fight on, and so much apprehension of fighting on what grounds there were. People inferred from the noise of Sacheverell's Jacobite sermon that Jacobitism was going to carry all before it; and they accordingly proceeded to help make the wave.<sup>1</sup> Thus the results of the election after the Sacheverell case were in large measure factitious, and a distinct misguidance to the successful clique.

At once the lucky ones proceeded to organize the situation. They did it on lines of the merest faction; and inasmuch as Bolingbroke admits full complicity in the course, he writes himself down once for all an ordinary politician of his period, in point of his ideals. First the Property Qualification Bill for members of the House of Commons was passed. On an essentially false charge of peculation, Walpole, the most able of the "coming" Whigs, who had refused a strong invitation to join the Tories, was sent to the Tower, the voting serving to exhibit in full play what we may term the element of blackguardism in the normal Conservative party. Next the Occasional Conformity Bill (a measure to strike down all public officials who, having once taken the Anglican sacrament, showed any favour to Dissent) was carried, with the effect of ejecting many dissenters from their posts. It had been proposed by the Tories in each of the first three years of Anne's reign, but had then been always rejected by the Lords, who remained predominantly Whig, partly because of their having the most to lose by a change of dynasty, partly by reason of the element of the Whig bishops appointed by William.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Many, again, were terrorized into withholding their votes. See the *Memoirs of Queen Anne*, 1729, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Lecky (*History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. cited, i. 109–11) dwells on the "remarkable fact" that in the reign of Anne the bishops were Low Church and the lower clergy High Church,



It was now reintroduced and carried, some Whigs in the Upper House concurring, by way of concession to the Tory High Churchman Lord Nottingham, who had united with them to oppose the peace desired by the Tory leaders,<sup>1</sup> while twelve new peers were created to make a majority. In Scotland (1712) the ancient usage of patronage was again set up in the Church, to which William had restored the Presbyterian constitution; and in England a stamp duty was set up to check cheap journals. Such was Bolingbroke's contribution to the cause of a free press.

At the same time, the Jacobite Ormonde was made Commander-in-Chief; and after a year or two of secret intrigue towards a Jacobite restoration, a further blow was struck against Dissent in the Schism Act (1714), which provided that no one should be allowed to keep a school unless he were a churchman and licensed by his bishop. It is clear, as Hallam remarks, that "if the queen's life had preserved the Tory government for a

without explaining that this was owing to the rapid alteration of the episcopacy on William's accession, when the two archbishoprics and six bishoprics were vacated, five of the latter and one of the former by ejection, the others by death. (Macaulay, Student's ed. 1877, i. 692; ii. 260-1). Those ejected began the line of non-juring bishops which lasted till nearly the end of the century (Buckle, 3-vol. ed. i. 412, *note*). The attitude of the House of Lords would be further determined through the natural process by which the nobles tended to draw to the throne, in respect of their prominent position. Buckle (i. 451) decides that "until the reign of George III, the House of Lords was decidedly superior to the House of Commons in the liberality and general accomplishments of its members," their prejudices being "tempered by an education that raised them far above" the country gentlemen and squires of the Lower House. He points to their protection of Somers and Walpole, who had done so much for the Hanoverian dynasty, against the impeachments brought in the Commons. But, seeing that the Upper House had in its turn committed Oxford to the Tower on an invalid charge of treason, its action is to be taken as a proof rather of its loyalty to the Whig cause than of any great moral superiority.

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, ii. 249.



few years, every vestige of the Toleration Act would have been effaced.”<sup>1</sup>

Bolingbroke avowedly played this game without scruple : he is even said to have pushed the Schism Act by way of forcing his hesitating and hated colleague-chief to commit himself decisively to one side or the other. At length the hated Oxford was actually disgraced and dismissed ; and Bolingbroke seemed secure of the power he so thirsted for, when almost on the instant the shears of fate cut his career. The queen died ; the Whig peers in the Privy Council promptly assumed control on behalf of George ; and the Tories, compromised with the House of Hanover by their intrigues with the Pretender, but wholly unprepared to fight for him, fell into the chaos they had predicted for their rivals.

The situation at Anne's death at once brought out, almost dramatically, the qualities of the leading politicians. The Tory party was in one of its characteristic plights. Moved strongly by a blind instinct, it had no leader who combined sincerity with capacity ; and its one brilliant statesman lost it its chance for sheer lack of sufficient motive to action. It wanted<sup>2</sup> to crown a king who was unluckily a Catholic, and it needed from him either a recantation or a promise to rule on Protestant lines. In the case of the Jacobite party, the yearning for this king was something like a passion : for Bolingbroke it was a faction-force which as leader he might profitably employ, a means to power, a brief, a pretext. In his luminous *Letter to Sir William Windham*,<sup>3</sup> by far the most memorable and the best written of all his pieces,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So Mr. Lecky, i. 120.

<sup>2</sup> There was a group of Hanoverian or “whimsical” Tories, but these were mere parliamentary strategists, not representative of the true Tory spirit.

<sup>3</sup> This is Bolingbroke's spelling of the name, now commonly written Wyndham.

<sup>4</sup> Cp. Hallam, *Const. Hist.*, 11th ed. ii. 227, note. It is still common to give this praise to the *Letters on the Study of History*. The student can decide for himself which is the more vital performance—the



he has revived the situation for us with the vividness of an embittered memory. With, for once, the keen concision of a great writer handling themes he is long master of, he retails the causes of the collapse of the Jacobite party; of the first fatal hesitation, of the later drifting and blundering. But all the while nothing is more clear than his own defect of political motive and purpose, other than self-advancement.

No doubt he might have played the game better if he had earlier had the leadership of his party. Whether or not his colleague Harley, Lord Oxford, was as vacillating as Bolingbroke alleged,<sup>1</sup> the latter would certainly have steered the course with more zeal for Toryism as a faction than Oxford ever showed. It was well for England that he was thwarted.

concrete narrative, vibrating with actuality, or the declamatory review of a telescoped past, of which the writer had only loose and unstudious knowledge. The best part of the *Letters* is precisely that (Let. viii) which deals with Bolingbroke's own time.

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Windham*, ed. 1753, pp. 55-66.



## CHAPTER V

### BOLINGBROKE AS STATESMAN AND THINKER

BOLINGBROKE had undoubtedly schemed to restore the Stuarts.<sup>1</sup> The French minister wrote to his king immediately after the queen's death that Bolingbroke had assured him his measures had been so well taken that in six weeks more time his position would have been secure.<sup>2</sup> He later declared that "nothing is more certain than this truth, that there was at that time *no formed design in the party*, whatever views some particular men might have, against his majesty's accession to the throne,"<sup>3</sup> a phrase which leaves his own designs undenied ; and his further quasi-denial in another place is a classic example of the prevarication that betrays itself. When in his letter *On the State of Parties at the Accession of George I*, appended to his *Idea of a Patriot King*, he repeats the assertion above quoted, and goes on to say that he has "the better right to expect credit," because if there

<sup>1</sup> Wyon is one of the few historians who hold that there was hardly any active Jacobite feeling in England in 1714 (*Reign of Queen Anne*, 1876, ii. 516). On this view it is unintelligible how there came to be any afterwards. Lord Chesterfield, who in 1714 was a young man in Paris, was then absolutely convinced that the queen and her ministers had planned the succession of the Pretender, and that it would soon have been effectively provided for (Letter to Jouneau, December 7, 1714, cited by Charles de Rémusat, *L'Angleterre au 18<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, 1856, i. 330). And Rémusat, in his very judicial inquiry, came to the conclusion that Bolingbroke had so schemed (ch. xvii).

<sup>2</sup> Letter of August 13, 1714, cited from the French Archives by Lecky, i. 202 ; Harrop, p. 169, note ; Stanhope, *History of England*, 2nd ed. i. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Windham, p. 49.



were such designs he "must have known of them," he is visibly trifling with our credulity.

We might fitly ask, in reply, what other designs he could have had. Swift, it is true, testified that during the four years of his intimacy with the Tory leaders he never heard a word in favour of the Pretender; but we know that Swift was kept in the dark as to intrigues which were actually going on.<sup>1</sup> His own scheme, put in his *Free Thoughts upon the Present State of Affairs* (1714), of excluding Whigs, Low Churchmen and dissenters from every office, and calling upon the Elector to abjure the Whigs in advance, was a masterpiece of political folly, not worth Bolingbroke's while to discuss. All this<sup>2</sup> simply makes it clear that Bolingbroke personally came to the plan of a Stuart restoration as the natural upshot of his policy of faction, in which some Tories had joined in the spirit of clique, and others in the spirit of Jacobitism. It was a desperate throw; and his late assertion that "there were moments when the execution of such a design would not have been difficult or dangerous enough to have stopped men of the most moderate resolution" means nothing. Feeling that the crowning stroke went beyond the lines of mere party tactics, he had made overtures to Walpole and the Whigs, which they rejected on finding that he would not declare against the Pretender.<sup>3</sup> To the Pretender he fatally gravitated; and when, on

<sup>1</sup> See Lord Morley's *Walpole*, p. 28. Hallam (iii. 227, note) flatly charges Swift with impudent lying. (Cp. Lecky, as cited, i. 199.) However this may be, Defoe's similar testimony on behalf of Harley (Minto's *Defoe*, pp. 108-14) has obviously no bearing as regards the plans of Bolingbroke.

<sup>2</sup> It appears to be Wyon's view that this was Bolingbroke's own plan.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Morley, noting that Bolingbroke had been planning a Jacobite restoration, points to the interview with the Whig leaders as a proof that he was "still drifting." Was it not rather part of his "measures"? Lord Morley rightly notes that Bolingbroke "was driven towards Jacobitism by the nature of the political situation" and his own personal ambition, "having no settled principles either way." So Hallam, ii. 225, note.



the menace of a charge of high treason, he fled to France, he naturally betook himself to the Pretender's Court. His apologia avows the extremity of his disappointment. The Prince has had a good deal of credit for his fidelity to his faith. Bolingbroke, himself a deist, but determined to maintain "religion," and hostile to all straightforward freethinking, studied him simply from the point of view of a Tory statesman who knew England to be determinedly Protestant; and his judgment of the Pretender runs: "The spring of his whole conduct is fear. Fear of the horns of the devil, and of the flames of hell. . . . He has all the superstition of a Capuchin: but I found in him no tincture of the religion of a prince. . . . I conversed with very few among the Roman Catholics themselves who did not think him too much of a papist." "The rod hangs like the sword of Damocles over his head, and he trembles before his mother and his priest."<sup>1</sup> Such was the hopeless personage to whose hopeless cause the political ideals of his time and his own political ambition had conducted the most gifted aristocrat of his day.

But to say all this is hardly to assent entirely to the severe judgment that "neither in fact nor observation, nor in his own conviction, have his writings foundation or bottom";<sup>2</sup> though the middle phrase is just. It is indeed the lack of the note of either political or intellectual sincerity that for us to-day devitalizes Bolingbroke's polemic. But he was really a keen observer; and even his

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Windham*, pp. 268-9, 294.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Morley, *Walpole*, p. 83. Still more severe is the same writer's decision (pp. 79-80) that "of all the characters in our history, Bolingbroke must be pronounced to be most of a charlatan; of all the writing in our literature, his is the hollowest, the flashiest, the most insincere." This seems excessive. Lord Morley, departing somewhat from his usual judicial practice, appears to estimate the man *in vacuo*, not staying to ask how Bolingbroke's powers came to be so vainly spent. But taking him as he stands, Bolingbroke is surely no more hollow, flashy, and insincere a type than Beaconsfield. And in flashiness and charlatanism he is surely sometimes equalled even by Chatham and Burke.



rapid survey of English history, as of history in general, reveals a spontaneous appreciation of political fact. Given only a disinterested conviction, a concern for a political ideal as distinguished from a concern for personal power, he would make a very different impression: a really intellectual purpose would have quickened his penetration and deepened his thinking.

The measure of his mind on the political side is best to be taken by contrasting him, not with later writers, but with his younger contemporary Hume, who makes his first appearance as a writer on politics in 1741. In some respects the comparison may seem unfair, inasmuch as Hume is wholly detached, having no thought of entering the arena, while Bolingbroke is in a manner fighting. But he fights with weapons of political analysis; and it is here that we are struck alike by his scientific inadequacy and by his ad captandum aim. The difference is as between light and fire. Hume, truly, is no reformer either: at thirty he is hardly even earnest to understand, despite his concern to be read, which makes him bait his hook with essaylets for the "general reader." But his curious scrutiny and placid penetration soon convey a sense of cool sagacity, of general trustworthiness, that Bolingbroke never sets up. At his best the latter is the keen party leader and tactician, quick to estimate immediate forces and to measure the weakness of men and multitudes. At his worst he is a *condottiere*, carrying on a bitter vendetta with an old political rival. Always, save in one or two domestic relationships, he lacks the note of goodness—even the measure of goodness to which Walpole attains by steady geniality. Pope was one of the few who loved him; and he did not greatly love Pope, even before he found that Pope had tricked him.

But the facts make him rather interesting than merely despicable for us at this distance of time, though neither his eulogists nor his censors seem to appreciate the intellectual tragedy of his career. In our political history he is one of the "dæmonic" figures, dominating men



by force of personality rather than by doctrine; and it often depends on the chapter of accidents whether such men turn out heroes or failures. With his powers, his lucidity, and his measure of rationalism, Bolingbroke needed only a good cause to make him a good statesman. The practical politics of that day, however, with its superstitious ideals and its vendettas of faction, admitted of no great causes, such as give statesmen great cues or openings; and those who succeeded where he failed were his superiors only in their practical basis and their success, not in their moral pitch and aspiration. To study their ideals, to realize what monarchism was for the respectable Addison, for instance, is to see how much *milieu* counts for, and how little Bolingbroke fell below his period or his opportunities.

It is difficult to read the *Freeholder* without feeling that the author of *Cato* was in some ways a poor creature; and when we come to that point we must pass from individual judgments to an estimate of the general level of civilization. The argumentation of the *Freeholder* is cheap and trivial simply because there is no high or great principle involved: a gentleman of letters has been paid to glorify the new king and satirize the rebels; and he proceeds methodically to earn his money.<sup>1</sup> Addison's

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay decides that among Addison's political works "the *Freeholder* is entitled to the first place." He can hardly have compared it with the *Whig Examiner*, which moved Johnson to warm praise. Even the character of Somers, which Macaulay specially commends, is an ordinary performance enough; and Johnson rightly if over mildly remarks that the satirizing of the Pretender on the score of his poverty "was not suitable to the delicacy of Addison." The inexpensive device of making out all the rebels to be cowards is of the same quality. Compare Macaulay's own admission as to the unworthiness of Addison's attitude in his *Travels* (ed. 1736, pp. 264-6) to the exiled Ludlow (*History*, ch. xv, ed. cited, ii. 131, *note*). Only in his own walk of humorous type-portraiture, as in the "Character and Conversation of a Tory Fox-hunter," does the journalist reach in his politics the level of literature. Of the *Freeholder* as a whole, Steele might well say that "the ministry made use of a lute, when they should have called for a trumpet."



petty and cheerfully snobbish sectarian propaganda is only on the score of its smallness and levity preferable to the nefarious rage of Swift : both alike were instruments of mere faction, working after their kind. If there be any ethical difference, it is at one point as much in favour of Swift, whose inexhaustible venom needed so little gold to feed it, as at another in favour of Addison, whose decorous intellect doubtless kept him satisfied of the respectability of the cause that paid him, where Swift, bitterly battling for a Church in which he believed only by way of antagonism to the unbelievers and the dissenters, had no worthier inspiration than lay in his genius for hate. Bolingbroke is on the moral side finally even a less admirable figure than these, but there are few prominent men in his period so much above him as to put him to great shame.

In an often-quoted passage, he publicly avowed in later life that he and his colleagues "came to court in the same dispositions as all parties have done ; that the principal spring of our actions was to have the government of the State in our hands ; that our principal views were the conservation of this power, great employment to ourselves, and great opportunities for rewarding those who had helped to raise us, and of hurting those who stood in opposition to us. It is however true, that with these considerations of private and party interest there were others intermingled, which had for their object the public good of the nation, or at least what we took to be such."<sup>1</sup> Griffith could not have chronicled more honestly ; and if Walpole had been moved to write *his* apologia, it would have been similar in terms if equivalent in candour. Both were men of faction. And if Walpole had the greater executive gift and the greater share of common sense as well as of will power, as he certainly had chosen the sounder and luckier side, he could on occasion work as factiously and as cynically as Bolingbroke ever did for "the government of the State," power

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Windham*, p. 19.



for himself, and the means of rewarding friends and resisting foes.<sup>1</sup>

Further than that our plea for Bolingbroke cannot go. In the words of Rémusat: "In him, the writer and the orator are to our eyes superior to the rest: the politician and the man do not equal them. Both had only the appearances of greatness."<sup>2</sup> Walpole at length rose to his task as a statesman: Bolingbroke sank below his; and the special tragedy of his career is that in grasping at the shadow of power he wasted the substance of an intellectual gift such as neither Walpole nor any other politician of his day possessed. Well might his pupil Pope adjure him—

Awake, my St. John; leave all meaner things  
To low ambition and the pride of kings.

That was uttered in 1732, when Bolingbroke had been allowed for years to live in England, and had conducted a new partisan campaign to oust Walpole. The higher things to which Pope called him were those of philosophy and literature. But Bolingbroke was neither philosopher enough nor man of letters enough to find his career in thought for its own sake or in writing for the sake of its art. His philosophy was stamped with indignity from the first, in that he never dreamt of asking the world to live by it. Playing his game in politics, he did not scruple to bring a charge of irreligion against Somers.<sup>3</sup> Again and again he avows or protests that he has no sympathy with open attacks on religion; <sup>4</sup> that he stands

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Ewald, *Sir Robert Walpole* (1878), pp. 110–11; Lord Morley, *Walpole*, p. 55; and Hallam, ii. 249, *note*.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Angleterre au 18<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, i. 452. Rémusat adds that "It is always fortunate that real greatness is lacking where there is neither benevolence (*bonté*) nor virtue." This would negate the greatness of Napoleon.

<sup>3</sup> Though long afterwards he said there was "never a wiser or a better man." (Sichel, i. 174.)

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Swift, September 12, 1724; *Letter to Pope* (printed with the *Letter to Windham*), ed. 1753, pp. 481–90.



for a national system of religion and accepts the existing Church, though he will have no clerical interpreters;<sup>1</sup> that he is for true Christianity, as found in the gospels, which he calls "the Word of God;" and he contemns<sup>2</sup> alike Leibnitz and Spinoza, Descartes and Hobbes. All the while he puts aside the belief in immortality,<sup>3</sup> the narrative of the Pentateuch,<sup>4</sup> and the whole body of current Christian dogma; and the constant note of his posthumous polemic is disparagement of the very clergy whose cause he had championed on its worst political lines.

It is hard to conceive of a great capacity, any more than of a great character, so divided against itself; and yet one can seldom read a page of Bolingbroke without realizing a rare talent. Much of the impression, doubtless, is due to the style, which, considered strictly in itself, merits the highest praise ever passed upon it. Those who latterly disparage it must have visited on the process of expression their sense of the inadequacy or unworthiness of some of the matter; for if the question of rightness in spirit and argument be waived, the sinewy ease of the writing is hardly to be matched in English controversial literature. No one in that age rivals it, save perhaps Berkeley. If we take Dryden as the founder of "modern" English prose, Bolingbroke is surely its first consummate master.

Hume, a rather capricious critic, pronounced in 1741 that "the first polite prose we have was wrote by a man [Swift] who is still alive."<sup>5</sup> But a quarter of a century later Hume wrote of Swift as one "whom I can often laugh with, whose style I can even approve, but surely

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Pope*, pp. 472, 486, 494, 516, 531; Essay IV, in *Works*, ed. 1754, iii. 350.

<sup>2</sup> Last cit., p. 351.

<sup>3</sup> *Letter to Pope*, p. 453; *Fragments and Minutes of Essays*, li, end of vol. iv. Yet he writes: "We Christians" (ii. 257).

<sup>4</sup> Letter on one of Tillotson's sermons, end of vol. v.

<sup>5</sup> Essay *Of Liberty and Despotism* (title later changed to *Of Civil Liberty*).



never admire. It has no harmony, no eloquence, no ornament, and not much correctness, whatever the English may imagine. Were not their literature still in a somewhat barbarous state, that author's place would not be so high among their classics."<sup>1</sup> In the interim Hume had read much of Bolingbroke. "Till I read that book," writes Chesterfield of the *Patriot King*, "I confess, I did not know all the extent and powers of the English language." Bolingbroke's style, he says again, "is undoubtedly infinitely superior to anybody's."<sup>2</sup> And Horace Walpole, who naturally took a very hostile view of Bolingbroke as man and as politician, pronounced him one of the finest of English writers. Swift, indeed, is strong without grace; Addison graceful without strength; Shaftesbury at his best strong indeed and carefully graceful; but Bolingbroke, without ever a semblance of strain, is normally perfect alike in grace and power. He is one of the born writers, possessing with unanxious mastery the art which others toilsomely attain.<sup>3</sup> Were the message, the matter, worthy of its vehicle, he would be one of the unquestioned classics of his race. Burke, who in the day of the French Revolution asked <sup>4</sup> "Who now reads Bolingbroke?" had learned to write by deliberately imitating Bolingbroke's style;<sup>5</sup> and one of his oftenest quoted passages—that telling how in the Court of pre-

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Robertson: Burton's *Life of Hume*, ii. 413; Ritchie's *Life*, p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son*, ed. 1901, i. 413; ii. 131.

<sup>3</sup> It is true that Bolingbroke, who talked as well as he wrote, told Chesterfield he had acquired the faculty "by an early and constant attention to his style." (*Id.* ii. 325.) But the "attention" was that of the born stylist, full of his gift.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Hassall (*Bolingbroke*, p. 226) writes that Burke "is said" to have put the question. He put it in a very well known work (*Reflections on the French Revolution*, 1790, p. 136).

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Seccombe, who is a Burke worshipper, notes (*The Age of Johnson*, 1900, i. 71) that "the effect of his careful study of Bolingbroke is constantly apparent in the balance of the long sentences."



revolutionary France "vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness"—is a mere echo of two passages of his model.<sup>1</sup>

But the very gift of utterance may be a snare to the reason; and in Bolingbroke the bane is manifest. He writes so easily, constructs so swiftly, keeps his pace and stride with such victorious certainty, that he misses the brooding discipline which slowness of phrase may force upon a less gifted mind. Again and again he flouts an argument without compassing it, overbearing a deep doctrine by mere confident fluency, putting precision of style in place of precision of thought. Wherever in his reasoning he counters a pregnant argument he is almost as sure to be shallow as to be facile: we have the adroit parliamentary swordsman, the forensic debater, instead of the true thinker. Brougham, who upon such a matter speaks with the insight of one who, with some kindred gifts, had played, less memorably, a not wholly dissimilar part, passes upon his mental powers an unstinted eulogy in which even the "unhappy veil of infidelity" is not allowed to obscure the merits of the subject; sets him, with Dryden, "at the head of all our great masters of diction"; and, highly praising Dryden, even claims that "Bolingbroke is more terse, more condensed where closeness is required, is more epigrammatic, and of the highest order of epigram." Yet he incidentally concedes that "the diction is eminently that of oratorical works," adding that "If Bolingbroke spoke as he wrote, he must have

<sup>1</sup> "The debauch of that age was enlivened with wit, and varnished over with gallantry." (*Letters on the Study of History*, viii. end.) "Decency and propriety of manners are so far from lessening the pleasures of life that they refine them, and give them a higher taste; they are so far from restraining the free and easy commerce of social life that they banish the bane of it—licentiousness of behaviour."<sup>2</sup> (*The Idea of a Patriot King*, near end.) And Burke's "great mysterious incorporation of the human race" (*Reflections*, p. 48) is Bolingbroke's "great commonwealth of mankind."<sup>3</sup> (*Patriot King*, Murray's rep., p. 193; also in *Philos. Works*, vol. ii., essay iv, section 4, *ad init.*)



been the greatest of modern orators."<sup>1</sup> That is the kernel of the matter; and Charles de Rémusat, a discerning and impartial critic, so puts it,<sup>2</sup> implying what Brougham would not readily have conceded, that oratory excludes profundity.

It is indeed rarely given to the born thinker to be at the same time a master of style, an art which relates more to æsthesis and passion than to the spirit of thought. Berkeley, with his subtler metaphysical faculty always ruled by passionate prejudgment, tells of the snare of facility of phrase no less plainly than does Bolingbroke. Hume, by far the truest thinker of the three, is in comparison a third-rate writer. With all his preoccupation over literary finish and literary fame, he never attained greatness of literary effect, precisely because style was for him always a matter of industrious technique, never of free play of gift. The criticism may be hazarded that, however often we may endorse his judgment and applaud his reasoning, we almost never remember a proposition of his in virtue of his way of putting it. For vivid and natural phrase he had no feeling;<sup>3</sup> and the "careless, inimitable beauties" assigned to his historic style in the generous eulogium of Gibbon are now found to evade the literary eye, whether Scotch or English. His genius is for comprehension, not for utterance.

With Bolingbroke the balance is the other way. His philosophy, partly an unavowed derivation from Shaftesbury, who again drew from Spinoza,<sup>4</sup> is rather a brilliant critical expatiation than a pondered system.<sup>5</sup> It is

<sup>1</sup> Art. on Bolingbroke in Appendix to vol. ii. of 3rd Series of *Statesmen of the Reign of George III*, ed. 1845, pp. 222-7.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Angleterre au 18<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, i. 451.

<sup>3</sup> The matter is discussed in *Essays towards a Critical Method*, 1889, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Details in introduction to the author's edition of the *Characteristics*, reprinted in *Pioneer Humanists*.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Saintsbury (*Social England*, v. 110) pronounces that Bolingbroke's "Deism, picked up in France, was utterly shallow."



thus inevitably inconsistent. Where he is at his literary best is in matters of concrete history. The *Letters on the Study and the Use of History* reveal to us a keen and vivacious intelligence, impatient of the dusty deadness of compilations in which history is at best “*nuntia vetustatis*, the gazette of antiquity, or a dry register of useless anecdotes.”<sup>1</sup> He was one of the first to demand an organic conception of the course of human affairs.<sup>2</sup> But he lacked the disinterested zeal for knowledge which should realize in any degree his own ideal. His survey and dismissal of the bulk of ancient history is in the manner of a man mainly concerned to consult his immediate convenience in his studies. Of the ancient writers whom he praises, even, he seems to have little knowledge;<sup>3</sup> and the conclusion to which he comes is the lame one that we should “read” without “studying” history down to the end of the fifteenth century; studying it only from that time onwards.<sup>4</sup> And though he takes some intelligent general views of history before his own

The statement italicized is quite false; and the judgment is merely part of a foregone animus against the “deist crew.” Bolingbroke’s deism is in reality deeper than that of almost any contemporary, including Shaftesbury, inasmuch as he expressly rejects the counter-sense of “infinite goodness.” Any one who will critically weigh the attempted reply of Gray (appended by Mason to letter of August 18, 1758) will see the difficulty of the problem from the orthodox standpoint. Bolingbroke is inconsistent, Gray evasive

<sup>1</sup> Letter v.

<sup>2</sup> Buckle omits to give him this credit when praising Voltaire (who learned from Bolingbroke), Mallet, and Mably for setting forth later similar views. But, indeed, the protest against the inorganic way of writing history seems to have been general in Bolingbroke’s day. See the preface to the *Memoirs of Queen Anne* (1729), where the mere narrator of occurrences is pronounced “no Historian, but a bare Relater of things.” Of Saint-Evremond, again, it has been noted that he was “one of the first to think of introducing into the history of facts that of manners and of intelligence.” (Bourgoin, *Les Maîtres de la Critique au xviii<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, 1889, p. 90.)

<sup>3</sup> Compare the strictures of Joseph Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 3rd ed., i. 121. But Warton wrote with a religious animus.

<sup>4</sup> Letter vi.



day, especially as regards the ecclesiastical element, he comes in the end to write something very like a gazette of the political history of his own day, producing indeed a vivacious summary, but throwing little or no light on its social and intellectual developments. He does but seek to prepare his reader to acquiesce in his own treatment of foreign politics: the motive is primarily a motive of faction, not a critical concern for knowledge. And on the side of religion he is equally opportunist. If, as is likely enough, Bolingbroke stimulated Voltaire to the handling of history embodied in the great *Essai sur les Mœurs*, it is none the less true that the pupil far outwent the master, alike as historian and as polemist. Even in his private parade of freethought to Pope, Bolingbroke is careful to stipulate that every good citizen will show "outward respect" to "things obviously false" when they "are interwoven into a system of government"; and gives his praise to "those wise and honest freethinkers," the Sufis, who habitually practise doubt, but "take care not to disturb the minds of other men."<sup>1</sup>

Such a teacher belongs properly to an age of moral and staminal arrest, and can have weight, as distinguished from vogue, only in such ages. There is forward progress while men are in the stage of doubting old creeds and fearing to assail them; but when we come to a point at which the instructed men consciously disbelieve, yet deliberately seek to maintain belief among the majority, we are on the verge of possible decadence. It was so in the civilizations of the past, and it is no thanks to the Bolingbrokes that the modern decline has not been continuous. Bolingbroke's agnostic theism, indeed, though rather better reasoned than the optimistic deism of his day, and much further developed than that of Pope, was even in its final form oddly fallacious, as when it dwelt on the propriety of "obeying" God<sup>2</sup> after

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Pope*, as cited, pp. 483-90.

<sup>2</sup> *Philosophical Works*, ed. 8vo, iii. 388-9.



demonstrating that God ruled by law, without interpositions, save perhaps in great matters. Thus, like the current deism, it was sufficiently rebutted by the *tu quoque* of Butler. Earnestness, however, would have made it a respectable creed like another. As it was, by disowning consistent freethinking and leaving his heresies to win what way they might in posthumous peace, Bolingbroke attained the minimum of rationalistic influence with the maximum of social discredit, since he brought on his name after death not only the abuse of the Tory Johnsons but the pietistic vilification of such a different Tory as Scott, who has described his ethical theism as "diabolical wickedness due to an excess of natural depravity"<sup>1</sup>—this while praising Bolingbroke for standing all the while by the Establishment. It was the posthumous publication of his real views that infuriated Scott—not unnaturally.<sup>2</sup> It equally infuriated most people to whom he would have cared to appeal; and though he must have been much read in the latter half of the eighteenth century, he never "made a school" in the

<sup>1</sup> Such a passage has a historical and political significance, showing as it does to what extravagance of ill-feeling a naturally luminous and genial nature like Scott's could be reduced by mere sectarian piety. Compare the utterances of Keble on the first Whig proposals to disestablish the Church of Ireland (Lock's *John Keble*, 1893, p. 78. Cp. p. 19). The kindred passion of political separateness led Scott into a similar display over the utterance of the Scotch Chancellor who remarked "That's the end o' an auld sang" over the Act of Union. Scott called it "an insult for which he deserved to have been destroyed on the spot by his indignant countrymen." (Cited by Burton, viii. 177, *note*.) Here the outbreak is absolutely foolish. "The end o' an auld sang" has deeper feeling and pathos in it than Scott's rant. It was well observed of Scott by Whately (*Table Talk*, in abridged *Life and Correspondence*, p. 417) that "If you were to ask him his private opinion of some great political event he would probably give you the most vulgar shallow fallacies. But when speaking in the character of some personage in his novels he will often take the most candid, enlightened, and sensible view of the same subject." The phenomena struck Whately as those of the mind of "a man in a state of clairvoyance."

<sup>2</sup> Cp. the remarks of Mr. Harrop, *Bolingbroke*, 1884, p. 332.



literary sense.<sup>1</sup> Only insofar as he inspired the sincerer and more disinterested Voltaire did he win much currency for his views in intellectual Europe. But we return to the comparative test : Bolingbroke's intellectual duplicity was a malady of his age, and seems to have been escaped only by the zealots—whether of the type of Addison,<sup>2</sup> or of Steele,<sup>3</sup> or of Berkeley,<sup>4</sup> or of Sacheverell—and by a few clear spirits such as Anthony Collins, honestly content with the deism of Locke. It was not escaped by Swift. And it was not wholly escaped by a man so deeply different from Bolingbroke as Walpole.

<sup>1</sup> As to his private influence, see the author's *Short History of Freethought*, 3rd ed. ii. 196.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. *Spectator*, 381, 600 ; *Tatler*, 111.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. *Spectator*, 234, 592 ; *Tatler*, 12, 135 ; *Guardian*, 9, 169.

<sup>4</sup> Cp. *Guardian*, 3, 27, 35, 39, 55, 62, 70, 77, 83, 88.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE RIVALS AND THEIR POLICIES

THE first impression felt on comparing Bolingbroke and Walpole is that of the vital contrast of their persons. Bolingbroke is nervous, lean, pale, high-strung, refined, irritable, a townsman, the last of a "high-bred" race: Walpole is a robust squire, rudely nerved, cool, stout, built of beef and ale, in whom the hardy insobriety of his rustic father has sown no more of nervous disintegration than serves to quicken the rustic wits to a singular sagacity. He "laughed the heart's laugh," and could be cordially kind to opponents.<sup>1</sup> When he opened his letters, he always read first that of his gamekeeper; and to him is credited the invention of the parliamentary "week-end," in the shape of the Saturday holiday, which he needed to get one day's hunting in the seven. His face, apart from the bright little eyes, is heavy as Bolingbroke's is keen; and if Bolingbroke was the more notorious for youthful debauchery, Walpole in after-life was the more noted for the impropriety of his talk at his own table.<sup>2</sup> The great fighter was a vigorous animal.

Differing as they did mentally in every aspect save one, and incapable of fraternizing on the strength of that, the two men were natural enemies.<sup>3</sup> As school-

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Lecky, i. 385, citing Pope's tribute in the *Epilogue to the Satires*.

<sup>2</sup> It is not altogether censoriously that Johnson accepts Walpole's alleged explanation of his habit of talk as one which put all men on an easy conversational level. Boswell, Globe ed. p. 373.

<sup>3</sup> Another point in common between the rivals, not generally known, is that the sister of each was the subject of some obscure scandal. Bolingbroke stood faithfully by his sister (Sichel, *Boling-*



boys at Eton they are said to have hated each other.<sup>1</sup> There the vigorous Walpole was naturally in the ascendant, St. John's qualities not being those that make a boy popular with boys. When they met as rivals in the House of Commons, St. John had already found himself; while Walpole had to acquire the kinds of address needed in that sphere, for which he had no better preparation than an abundance of rough-and-ready debate with college-mates and country neighbours over the politics of the day. St. John was literary to his finger-tips: Walpole could never be at home with books. Yet, oddly enough, both were "skeptics," in the popular sense of the term. It is said of Walpole by a modern biographer that he "regarded all creeds with the impartiality of indifference," looking upon religion "as a local accident and as the result of hereditary influences";<sup>2</sup> and for this we have circumstantial authority in Lord Hervey's account of how, when it was proposed to bring the Archbishop of Canterbury to pray for the dying Queen Caroline, who as a deist did not think such ministrations necessary, Walpole tranquilly advised that the "farce" should be played, and commented on the "wise and good fools who will call us atheists if we don't pretend to be as great fools as they are."<sup>3</sup> The fact has elicited

*broke*, ii. 354-6). Walpole (it was in his early days) characteristically succeeded in dragging his sister out of a compromising position, whereafter she married Townshend. (Lady Louisa Stuart's "Introductory Anecdotes," in Moy Thomas's ed. of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters and Works*, 1893, i. 68-71.)

<sup>1</sup> "A spontaneous aversion, the more intense because unaccountable," says Ewald (*Sir Robert Walpole*, p. 14), "had blackened the heart of each towards the other." The aversion, if it existed, is perfectly accountable. But proof seems to be lacking.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 40. Cp. p. 446: "A sceptic as regards religion."

<sup>3</sup> Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*, 1855, ed. Croker, ii. 527. This and Ewald's inference are perfectly compatible with Horace Walpole's account (*Letters*, ed. 1840, ii. 346) of his father's reply to Queen Caroline when she urged him to read her favourite Butler's *Analogy* (1736). He replied that his religion was fixed, and that he did not wish to change or improve it.



little comment in comparison with the case of Bolingbroke; and Lord Morley does not mention it. But it should be kept in view, not only as against Gladstone's very erroneous assertion that practical politicians have nearly always been good believers, but for the purpose of weighing Walpole against Bolingbroke. The difference between them was that Walpole never published his opinions, even posthumously; and that he had a really firm belief in the Protestant Succession as a political cause, while Bolingbroke had no vital conviction to put against that. But it is further edifying to know that Walpole as a younger son had been intended for the Church; that he would have taken Orders had not both his elder brothers died in his youth; and that he "was accustomed to say that, had he not become an eldest son, he would have been installed as Archbishop of Canterbury instead of holding the seals as Prime Minister."<sup>1</sup> He probably would!

It is hard to say whether, had not Bolingbroke been astray in his forecast of party chances, his brilliant parts would not have enabled him to triumph over the more commonplace Walpole; though the latter possessed a formidable qualification in his cool force of will, which must always have made him a tough opponent. But Walpole too was a born man of affairs. In his first year on the Naval Board under Prince George of Denmark, the queen's consort, he already attracted the notice of Godolphin; and on Bolingbroke's dismissal in 1708, Walpole succeeded him as Secretary for War. So well did he acquit himself that after the Whig rout in 1710 Harley desired him to keep his post, "telling him that he was as good as half of his party put together." Harley, further, clung to his policy of counteracting his High Church colleagues. Wisely refusing, Walpole suffered prosecution and imprisonment as aforesaid. He had chosen his side and he was not to be turned from it.

Given, however, his luck in choosing the winning side, and granting that this luck was the outcome of his sincere

<sup>1</sup> Ewald, p. 8.



preference for the Whig cause, it is clear that he too was primarily an energetic individuality with strong practical convictions and personal ambition, hungry for power, rather than a statesman who had deeply thought out principles and framed patriotic ideals. That kind of statesman had no part in that age. The feasible volitions of the time were those of men who typified, while leading, faction forces. And as the average Whig bias was more intelligent than the Tory, inasmuch as the critical or innovating spirit is *typically* (whatever may be the individual variations) more intelligent than the spirit of mere custom-worship and tradition, Walpole's statesmanship was as a rule much more sane than that of Bolingbroke, whose main policy, as a High Church leader, was as irrational from the point of view of his philosophy of life as it was superficially expedient from the standpoint of his faction. Walpole was in harmony with his destiny, with his function, where Bolingbroke was falsely placed.

And yet Walpole was at times not a very much more conscientious or "principled" statesman than Bolingbroke, though, in the end, he has been much more helpful to progress. His great merit, for posterity, lies in his having belonged to, and sustained by his prudence, the faction whose success was the more compatible with civilization. But his superiority is a matter of cumulative influence, not of primary principle. For nothing is his policy more justly praised than for its avoidance of war; and as it happens, Bolingbroke's most considerable performance was his share in the Peace of Utrecht, an arrangement which, despite the criticisms to which it was and is open,<sup>1</sup> should have had Walpole's support on general principle, but which he and the other Whigs vehemently denounced. It should be noted that Boling-

<sup>1</sup> See the careful summing-up of Hallam; and compare Macaulay, Essay on "Lord Mahon's War of the Succession in Spain"; Morley, *Walpole*, p. 25; Lecky, *History*, i. 152 sq. See also Hassall, *Bolingbroke*, ch. iii, and Minto's *Defoe*, p. 98 sq.



broke declares<sup>1</sup> he always thought and owned, "even when it was making and made," that "the Peace of Utrecht was not answerable to the success of the war, nor to the efforts made in it." The inadequacy of the conditions imposed, he unplausibly maintains, "was owing solely to those who opposed the peace," namely "the Germans and Dutch in league with a party in Britain," who began their opposition "as soon as the first overtures were made to the queen," and were thus objecting "not to this or that plan of treaty, but in truth to all treaty."<sup>2</sup>

The really strong case for the peace emerged in 1711, when by the death of the Emperor Joseph from small-pox (17th April) his brother the Archduke Charles, the League's claimant for the Spanish throne, became probable Emperor. War had been originally held to be necessary because of the dangerous overplus of Bourbon power that would be set up if one of that family ruled in Spain. It was equally against the principle of the balance of power that the Emperor, wielding the whole power of Austria, should be King of Spain; and Charles had been backed for that throne because his accession as Emperor was thought extremely unlikely. Charles, for his part, was eager to be both Emperor of Germany and king of Spain; and he always bitterly opposed a peace. Louis, on the other hand, was so anxious for peace that when the Allies detached a force into Germany to support Charles's election, he compelled Villars to weaken his force in a similar way, lest that ardent commander should win a victory which would revive warlike feeling among the Allies.<sup>3</sup> In such circumstances a peace policy was highly justifiable; and the Whig reasons for fighting on till the power of Louis was completely broken were in comparison inconclusive;<sup>4</sup> but Anne's ministers could

<sup>1</sup> *Letters on the Study of History*, viii.

<sup>2</sup> On all this see Hallam's note (of 1845), iii. 219.

<sup>3</sup> Wyon, *History of Queen Anne*, 1876, ii. 297.

<sup>4</sup> Wyon (ii. 293 sq.) appears to think that the Whig leaders did



hardly put their case openly without flouting the Emperor, their ally ; and in point of fact they had been against the war for years past, for quite different reasons.

All parties, in fact, had envisaged the war in terms of faction interests. Bolingbroke was adopting the policy of William's Partition Treaties with France, which he had denounced ; even as Walpole afterwards founded his French policy on Bolingbroke's. William, whose whole politics was a matter of battling unweariedly with France and maintaining the Protestant interest, left the Alliance war with France as a legacy to his adherents in England, who carried it on for the double reason that in beating back France they were combating the Power behind the Popish Pretender, and that in winning victories they were strengthening their prestige. The friends of the Pretender, on the other hand, desired to be at peace with the Power which harboured him. Marlborough desired to go on conquering for his own power and glory ; and the Whig leaders had the support of the revived spirit of national unity. Even on the financial side, they had the comfort of knowing that the cost was largely paid by the Tories in the shape of the land tax, though the dividends of public companies were also heavily mulcted, and the imposts put upon articles of consumption made life very hard for the poor. What was worse, the Whig leaders repeatedly sought to introduce conscription to recruit the army, and finally did set in force a system which anticipated the press-gang.<sup>1</sup> But between the landlords and the multitude there stood the growing class of investors, who lent money to the State at interest, and who constituted one of the strongest supports of the Whig party, inasmuch as their incomes depended on the maintenance of the Protestant succession.

No better device could have been deliberately em-  
not see the change wrought in the situation by Charles's accession to the emperorship ; but that could not be. They saw counter-considerations.

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, iii. 214 *note*.



ployed for the founding of a new dynasty than this of a National Debt, which had been compulsorily resorted to by William, after Dutch precedent, as a means of raising necessary funds. In England, as long before in Holland, a moneyed interest was arising <sup>1</sup> on a scale which promised a solid counter-weight to the landed interest, so obstinately wedded to legitimism; and to put the moneyed interest on the side of the new line was a stroke of policy such as the old statecraft had not dreamt of. Given a Whig National Debt, which the Tories avowedly resented, every chance of a legitimist reaction meant a risk to so many thousands of upper-middle-class incomes; <sup>2</sup> and for no ideal in human affairs will men fight harder than for these. By the moneyed class, accordingly, as by the Protestant interest generally, the war was approved.

By the downright Tories, of course, it was disapproved, not primarily for the high reasons of State given by Swift and Bolingbroke and Defoe, but because it was a Whig war to begin with, because France backed the Pretender, and because its cost fell mainly on the land.<sup>3</sup> To them the fame of Marlborough was but that of an apostate, and the defeat of France was a new obstacle in the way of the true succession; wherefore, justly or unjustly, they accused the Whigs of deliberately seeking to make a peace impossible,<sup>4</sup> fearing that it would frus-

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Buckle, ch. vii at note 146 (Routledge's 1-vol. ed. p. 228); Cunningham, *English Industry and Commerce*, ii. 410-13.

<sup>2</sup> Thus the stocks rose greatly when Queen Anne was believed to be dying, and sank when she was thought likely to recover. Lecky, i. 207, note. Cp. Rogers, *Industrial and Commercial History of England*, p. 126, as to the fall of Bank Stock in 1710, on the report of the Tory victory in the elections.

<sup>3</sup> Note the incisive utterance of Swift in the *Examiner*, No. 13 (cited by Hallam, iii. 214), to the effect that "power, that was used to follow land, is now gone over to money," and that the landowner was being bled for a war run by the moneyed men.

<sup>4</sup> See the argument put forth at length by Bolingbroke in his eighth letter *On the Study of History*. It is to the effect that the



trate Whig plans for the English succession. On the other hand, the Tories were with good reason charged with granting a peace in the interests of France and Jacobitism; and it was in respect of the over-favourable terms granted to Louis that the Whigs had their case against Bolingbroke. But, however all this might be, a peace on some basis was desirable on those principles of domestic policy to which Walpole during the rest of his life adhered; and the Peace of Utrecht was clearly more of a good than an evil. As Macaulay definitely summed up: "On the great question which divided England during the last four years of Anne's reign, the Tories were in the right, and the Whigs in the wrong. . . . We are therefore for the Peace of Utrecht."<sup>1</sup>

It is instructive, however, to note how little of modern Liberalism is to be traced in the Whig discussion of that Germans and Dutch were carrying on the war for their own interests, reducing England to the status of a province of the confederacy, and making her contribute far more than her fair share of the cost; while the English Whigs abetted them for reasons of faction. The terms insisted on by the Allies, he plausibly reasons, were such as they knew the French king would never accept; and the conquest of Spain, besides, was hopeless. As Stanhope put it, armies of twenty or thirty thousand might march about Spain "till doomsday"; but as soon as they were withdrawn the Spanish people would dethrone the Austrian Charles and proclaim again the Bourbon Philip. This cannot now be gainsaid: but we have sufficient proof that some of the Whig leaders actually supposed they could force Louis to make war on his grandson, as they called upon him to do at Gertruydenberg in 1706. Lord Cowper's *Diary* (cited by Coxe, *Life of Walpole*, 1800, i. 47) shows that though he always doubted whether Louis would accept such hard conditions, the other ministers confidently believed he would. At least Cowper clearly held them to be sincere in their belief: nor was it without reason: see Hallam, iii. 213, *note*. On the other hand, Bolingbroke refers to chimerical Whig hopes of setting up a revolution in France and dethroning Louis.

<sup>1</sup> Essay on "Lord Mahon's War of the Succession": *Essays*, ed. 1856, i. 261-3. Here Macaulay took the Tory side in the old debate, while the Tory Stanhope took the other. The rightness and the wrongness in 1713 were both fortuitous; but Walpole later made the right policy the foundation of his.



Peace, and how little of modern Toryism in the framing of it.<sup>1</sup> The most shocking of its provisions, that giving England a monopoly of the slave trade with the Spanish possessions in America, incurred no obloquy; but commercial London was lashed into the wildest excitement by the Whig outcry over the proposal which followed on it, to set up something like free trade with France. On that head the majority even of impartial critics of the treaty in recent days are oddly silent;<sup>2</sup> yet the episode is a most remarkable one. Commercial hallucination—or deceit—never went further than in the amazing pretence that the trade of England with Portugal under the Methuen Treaty of 1703, on the footing of giving its wines an advantage over those of France, yielded an annual profit in bullion, whereas anything like free trade with France would drain England of her treasure and reduce her people of all grades to beggary.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Earl Stanhope's much discussed phrase as to the transformation of parties (*History of England*, 2nd ed., 1839, i. 6-7, and App., end. Cp. Macaulay, *Essays*, People's ed. i. 259, ii. 362; and Lecky, *History*, i. 2) might have been better applied to the situation in 1711. Compare Harrop's *Bolingbroke*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> It is passed over by Hallam, by Lord Morley, by Ewald, by Green, by Gardiner (*Student's History*, though he notes that the Tories promoted trade) and by Mr. Morris (*Early Hanoverians*). Earl Stanhope, of course, discusses it, and Lecky gives it proper prominence. He seems to err in his grounds for saying (i. 177) that the proposal of free trade with France was that which most injured the Tory Ministry. Such may have been the fact, in the sense that it lost them Tory votes upon that issue, but Bolingbroke's words, as quoted by him (p. 181), do not bear this out. Bolingbroke does not mention the trade dispute at all, though he would have it in view.

<sup>3</sup> See the doctrines of *The British Merchant* cited in Craik's *History of British Commerce*, 1844, ii. 165-70, and summarized by Lecky, as cited. See also the *Memoirs of Queen Anne* (p. 210), where it is further argued that the encouragement to the consumption of the "agreeable" French wines, by the reduction of the duty, would kill the trade in Spanish and Portuguese wines. In other words, French wines were to be kept dear in order that the British public should be made to consume port and sherry,



Thus was presented the interesting spectacle of the Tory party advocating free trade in the interests of upper class consumers, and especially of the landed gentry, while the Whigs, through their closer connection with trade, were committed to the defence of the special trading interests which flourished under the Methuen Treaty, and those which dreaded free imports of manufactures. Everybody interested in the existing trade with Portugal, notably the exporters of woollens and the importers of Portuguese wines, fought for his profits; and every manufacturer of goods with which France could compete fought for exclusion. The situation is on one side as old as the age of the Edwards,<sup>1</sup> when the baronage were on the side of free imports, and the industrials were against them. On neither side was public spirit involved, the Tories being quite unconcerned about the mass of poor consumers; while the Whig arguments about national ruin through the drain of bullion were but screens for the private interests really involved. It is this equivocal basis that makes the "mercantile" theory about bullion so ambiguous.<sup>2</sup> In reality, exporters

which were the return for the woollen goods sold by some British merchants to Portugal and Spain. The Whig view was accepted by Burnet (*History of My Own Times*, ed. 1838, p. 897).

<sup>1</sup> Cp. the author's *Trade and Tariffs*, 1908, pp. 21, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Lecky exaggerates it—or puts the most extreme form of it—in stating (i. 199) that "according to the mercantile theory, which was then in the ascendant, money alone is wealth." For different views as to the notion actually held see Leslie Stephen, *Fortnightly Review*, May, 1880, p. 689—a passage in contradiction with the same writer's remarks in his *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd ed. ii. 287, 297. Compare Macleod, *Elements of Economics*, p. 49; Buckle, ch. vii; Ingram, *Hist. of Pol. Econ.*, p. 37; and Dr. Bonar, *Philosophy and Political Economy*, 1893, p. 69. Mr. Macleod (who takes the extreme view) speaks in his *Primer (Economics for Beginners*, p. 6) of the theory as collapsing at the end of the seventeenth century. In his *Elements* he speaks differently. Earl Stanhope appears to have held by the bullion doctrine in the nineteenth century. Concerning the doubts of Dr. Cunningham (whose account of the trade situation of 1711 in his *Politics and Economics*, 1884, pp. 63–5, is highly misleading) see *The Evolution of States*, pp. 466–7.



of woollens to Portugal knew well enough that their goods paid for the Portuguese wines, and must have known that under free trade with France, French wines would similarly have been paid for by English goods, whether sent direct to France or elsewhere. A draining away of bullion in payment for imports never did and never could take place in any productive country ; though bad money could, and in England (as we shall see) did, drive out good. But, as in France the traders who sought protection against Holland under Colbert affirmed that Holland was draining France of bullion, so in England particular trades, such as the manufactures of silk, linen, and paper, dreaded French competition, and the bullion argument was put forward in their interest.

It is noteworthy that in the Commons debates Walpole was not among the Whig speakers who opposed the treaty of commerce. He was destined to be a reducer of tariffs ; and only dissent could well have kept him silent when his party fought on such an issue. The leading opponents of the commercial clause were Halifax (Montague) and Stanhope ; and it was the latter who upset the skilful plan of opening the way for the treaty by taking the duties off French wines for two months—a device which had almost succeeded when he by chance detected it.<sup>1</sup> On the Tory side the free trade policy was advocated by, among others, “ Mr. Arthur Moore (a person who, by his industry and abilities, had, much to his honour, raised himself from the station of a footman) ” ; <sup>2</sup> becoming a “ Commissioner of Trade ” and an authority on trade and finance entitled to be named in his day beside John Locke and Dudley North. In after years, he influenced Walpole as he had influenced Bolingbroke,<sup>3</sup> though his integrity had been put in some doubt during the later

<sup>1</sup> Craik, ii. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, ed. Tauchnitz, i. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Harrop, p. 149. Cp. *Memoirs of Queen Anne*, pp. 215, 218, 307, and Burnet, as cited, p. 898. See there the note by Onslow, as illustrating the temper of the time. Moore seems to have been the only specialist consulted by Bolingbroke ; and it has been



debates on the treaty.<sup>1</sup> Moore may thus be inferred to have been one of the convinced free-traders of his time—a number only to be guessed at, for they did not write or combine.<sup>2</sup> But there is no reason to ascribe free-trading views to either Bolingbroke or Harley. Defoe, then Harley's zealous henchman, fought vigorously for the commercial treaty in his journal *Mercator, or Commerce Retrieved*, founded by him for the purpose; but Defoe was never a free-trader. "I am far," he wrote, "from being of their mind who say that all prohibitions are destructive of trade and that wise nations, [like] the Dutch, make no prohibitions at all." Then, and fifteen years later, he stood fast to protectionist principles.<sup>3</sup> If we can infer anything from the polemic of Defoe (who justified exclusion of French goods under William and opposed it under Anne, and who alternately affirmed that England had lost heavily and that she had gained greatly by previous trade with France), Bolingbroke and Harley may have believed, what Defoe asserted, that France would lose and England gain by the admission of English woollens into France. If so, they were probably wrong, for the English stuffs, made from unmixed wool, were less liked in France than the finer French stuffs made from mixed wool. The gain of free intercourse to both nations would have been general and equal. Of course, the time was in any case a bad one for inviting the English people to trade freely with the ancient enemy; economic argument, good or bad, could not prevail against concrete trade interest;<sup>4</sup>

suggested that this refusal to consult with business men had something to do with the dead set made against the policy. (Wyon, *History of Queen Anne*, 1876, ii. 447–50.)

<sup>1</sup> Wyon, ii. 513–14.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Evolution of States*, p. 466, as to private discussion under Charles II.

<sup>3</sup> Minto, *Daniel Defoe*, in "Men of Letters" Series, 1879, pp. 100–4.

<sup>4</sup> While Defoe ran the *Mercator*, the Whig magnates subsidized *The British Merchant* on the other side. Craik, *History of British Commerce*, ii. 167–8.



and though at the first challenge the bill giving effect to the free-trade clauses of the treaty was carried by a large majority, the mercantile agitation and the special pleading of the traders heard in committees of the House prevailed with a section of the anti-French Tories, so that the measure was lost by nine votes.<sup>1</sup> A century and a half was to pass before a commercial treaty with France became a reality in England.

For the rest, Hallam justly insists<sup>2</sup> that Bolingbroke's later principles, as expounded in his propagandist works, were Whig. In the *Patriot King* he expressly takes up Locke's position as to the kingship. He had realized that, as Defoe put it, "the Constitution is a Whig."<sup>3</sup> And still we come back to the conclusion that he lacked solidity, conviction, character, all the elements which make a public man great instead of merely brilliant. His later life was a long vituperation of other men for doing what he would assuredly have done with more alacrity than they, had he been in their place. Bolingbroke's case always points us back to the grounds on which we finally criticize life. We feel that he exemplifies the force of waste and frustration in things; that no more than his corrivals, and much less than Walpole, did he see life steadily or whole; that his inner light was ever darkened by the smoke of his egoism; that between his flaws and his evil circumstances his work was largely fitted to be cast as rubbish in the void. It only needs that we bring the same tests to bear on his contemporaries, always remembering how his unscrupulous policy when in power tended to arouse against him a temper on the plane of his own.

It was inevitable that when the Hanoverian faction came into power it should menace the leaders of the other party who had schemed for the Pretender. Boling-

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Queen Anne*, pp. 212-19.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitutional History*, iii. 299.

<sup>3</sup> Minto's *Defoe*, p. 93.

Bolingbroke  
Principles  
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broke declared<sup>1</sup> that he and other Tories were driven into the Pretender's arms by the Whig prosecution; and, though he was falsifying the past in suppressing his antecedent intrigues, there may have been a measure of truth in the statement. But, as he admitted, he had earned a prosecution by his own former partisan policy, to say nothing of his "treason." And Walpole, who was bound to assume Jacobite intentions on the part of leading Tories, was also bound to take the opportunity of putting out of action the most dangerous of all. Those who, looking back, argue that the proper course was to treat the leading Tories with lenity, no matter how unscrupulously they had persecuted when they could, forget that the chances were in some respects very evenly balanced as regards the Hanoverian accession.

What did the Sacheverell election signify? An overwhelming Tory victory at the polls had been engineered by way of a Church cry which meant, if anything political, absolute devotion to the exiled House. If a plebiscitum of the English people could have been taken on the succession at the moment of Queen Anne's death, it is rather likely, so far as we can judge, that it would have gone in favour of the Stuart heir. Hallam will not go further than to say that it is "highly probable" that a majority of the English people would have voted for the deposition of James in 1688; and he recognizes the later revulsion of feeling. The safe advent of George was effected by the prompt and decisive action of the Whig peers on the Privy Council. Had Bolingbroke been left free, his natural course would have been to engineer new movements through the Church; and no man could have predicted the issue. The fact that Bolingbroke actually joined the Pretender in France proves that he at the outset believed a Jacobite triumph was possible. Who could then say it was not?

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Windham*, p. 267; *Letter On the State of Parties at the Accession of George I*, appended to the *Patriot King*.



It may be that the problem was not so weighed: the simple fact may be that even Walpole was a man to leap at the chance of banishing his most dangerous rival; and Walpole was the most clement and statesmanlike politician on the Whig side. On the other hand, it seems idle to charge Bolingbroke with losing his wits<sup>1</sup> in taking flight instead of staying to face prosecution as Oxford did; for Bolingbroke was much more deeply compromised than his colleague,<sup>2</sup> and where Oxford was imprisoned, Bolingbroke might have been beheaded. And he had the more reason to apprehend that consummation, seeing that he knew very well he might have beheaded some of the leading Whigs had the positions been reversed.

Then began the era of a Whig statesmanship which is sometimes called constructive, but which was in the main only — and necessarily — regulative and static. The fatality of the Stuarts had been their proclivity to making trouble; the cue of the Guelphs was to keep industriously out of trouble; and it was in taking this cue that Walpole found his opportunity. His Whig bias may be set down primarily to the accident of inheritance; his adhesion to it was the expression of his gift.

<sup>1</sup> So Harrop, p. 221. This writer takes an unusually favourable view of Oxford's character, ascribing to him "clear judgment" and "tranquil courage." The friendly but judicial *Life of Harley* by Miss E. S. Roscoe (1902) denies him "large intellect or conspicuous strength of character" (p. 3).

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hassall (*Bolingbroke*, p. 115), concurring with Harrop, argues that the report of Walpole's Committee of Secrecy proves it to have been impossible to *convict* Bolingbroke of treason. But Bolingbroke could not tell how much evidence might have been found. And Mr. Hassall on the next page indicates Bolingbroke's untrustworthiness. In the same way Stebbing pronounces that "his flight was a blunder," after telling of Bolingbroke's fear that Prior would betray him. (*Some Verdicts of History Reviewed*, pp. 172-3.) As regards the failure of the Committee of Secrecy to find decisive evidence against Bolingbroke, Stebbing expressly avows that "his compromising papers were in security; and only one confidant existed who had anything dangerous to tell. This was Matthew Prior."



of good-tempered but vigorous self-assertion, and determination to have his own way. Soon it became plain that the political situation was one which called for qualities in the king's ministers that did not normally go with hereditary wealth and title. The changing conditions of life set up new snares for administrators. The crude energies which were balked of employment in civil and foreign strife took up the new excitement of gambling in stocks; the South Sea Bubble loomed prismatically over the land, a hallucination as intense, if not so enduring, as those which excited earlier generations; and the administration must needs have its share in this as in former excitements. Their folly gave Walpole his great chance.



## CHAPTER VII

### WALPOLE'S ASCENT

ALREADY in the first few years of George's reign, as in the last years of Anne's, Walpole had met with vicissitudes of place. In the first two years he was one of the ministry with his brother-in-law Townshend and Stanhope, having not only deserved well of the Whig cause by his pamphlets on the Sacheverell case and on the management of the war, but shown great administrative capacity as Secretary at War under Anne in 1708-10. He was, in fact, as was his prosperous high-farming father before him, an excellent man of business; and Godolphin, the habitual silent gambler in private life and consummate financial manager in affairs of State, early recognized his signal practical capacity and unwearying diligence. In his great period of power he is believed to have written all his important despatches and State Papers with his own hand, his industry being as great as his insight. Such industry with such capacity, always rare in upper-class politicians, was then particularly so, and Walpole soon found employment when his party returned to power. In 1714 he took office as Paymaster of the Forces; and in 1715 a lucky vacancy allowed him to be made First Lord of the Treasury. The office had been held by Lord Halifax, famous as Charles Montague, the second prominent politician with that title;<sup>1</sup> and a peer, Lord Carlisle, was put in his place. But the peer was incompetent, and on his speedy resignation the competent commoner was set in the post for which he was best fitted.

<sup>1</sup> The first was George Savile, Marquis of Halifax: the second, Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, d. 1715.



Like Burke in the next generation, he broke down his health by overwork at this early stage; and it was during his temporary withdrawal that his colleagues carried the Septennial Bill, an audacious but judicious stroke of State<sup>1</sup> which, lengthening as it did the Whig Parliament's lease of life by four years, did at least as much as anything else to secure the new dynasty in its place at the time of its greatest instability. King George, with his squalid crew of fat mistresses and hungry hangers-on vying with each other in the Teutonic grossness of their greed and their amusements, displayed neither dignity nor decency; and if ribaldry could have worked a revolution, his reign would have been brief.

It is the measure of the political development of the England of the day that the monarchic superstition could rest on such an altar, haloing George because it could not risk James, the while the worshippers of James covered George with derision. But the method of governing through ministers, albeit quite fortuitously established, sufficed to keep the vulgar George safe in the throne where the picturesque Stuarts could never sit at peace. Self-interest as well as dislike of foreign interference kept the English ministers on the defensive against the male and female leeches of the new court; and fairly good management kept up their financial credit. But after the fiasco of the Jacobite rising in 1715,<sup>2</sup> the sense of security all round gave scope for the caballing and intriguing natural to the situation, with the crowd of German and nondescript courtiers on the one hand, excluded from public office; the group of mutually jealous

<sup>1</sup> By common consent, three years was than a most unfit term for a Parliament's life. What Steele said of the consequences then (cited by Stanhope, ch. vi) would be partly true even to-day. The first session of each triennial Parliament was mainly occupied in squabbles over the last election; the second with obstinate strife over new measures; and the third with corrupt planning for the next election.

<sup>2</sup> Which did not even affect the price of stocks. (Rogers, as cited, p 129.)



ministers on the other, each ambitious of the highest place; and the heir-apparent, hating and hated by his father, wire-pulling between. As a result of the Prince's intriguing, Townshend was removed from his Secretaryship<sup>1</sup> to the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland—a Cabinet post; and the dubious Sunderland and the diplomatic Stanhope became first favourites. Soon Townshend, failing to second the king's continental policy, was dismissed; and at once Walpole elected to go out with him, despite the uncommonly warm dissuasion of the king.<sup>2</sup> The cat-and-dog Guelphs had the saving faculty which the graceful Stuarts always lacked: they chose good servants.

It was a bold step on the part of Walpole, thus solicited by the king, to insist on standing by his brother-in-law; and only a man who was sure of his own strength would have taken it. But Walpole had some cause to be confident. The great problem for English Governments was now the financial one, and already Walpole had been taking it skilfully in hand. The National Debt stood at fifty millions, a rock of offence to Tories and a stone of stumbling to Whigs, though a cornerstone of their edifice. Walpole's first thought was to put it in manageable order. He accordingly framed a plan, such as had been cherished before his day, for unifying the debt by turning annuities into stock; and he saw his way to reducing the interest. Here he was only following in the footsteps of Godolphin;<sup>3</sup> and he

<sup>1</sup> He was "Secretary of State for the Northern Department," nominally equal with Stanhope.

<sup>2</sup> See the details, as given by Walpole's brother, in Ewald's *Life of Walpole*, pp. 106–7. When it is remembered that George and Walpole conversed in dog-Latin, the scene becomes the more memorable.

<sup>3</sup> In 1708, when £2,000,000 was owed to the East India Company, Godolphin borrowed £1,200,000 more; but got a reduction of interest on the whole sum, so that his annual charge was not increased. In return he simply extended their monopoly from 1714 to 1729. At the same time the Bank's monopoly was en-



was able to do so because, like Godolphin, he had won the confidence of the capitalist class, who recognized a good man of business when they saw him.

The difficulty as to the annuities was that the consent of the holders of the irredeemables was necessary to any readjustment; but the redeemable debts were easily negotiable; and in 1717 many of the holders were induced to subscribe their short annuities into 5 per cent. stock of the South Sea Company. Walpole further arranged to borrow two millions from the Company, and two-and-a-half millions more from the Bank, to pay off the annuitants who might refuse to accept a reduction of their interest from 6 to 5 per cent. after 1727; but they all agreed, so that the loan was not required. The annuitants had really no better investment open to them. At the same time, and for the same reason, the Bank and the South Sea Company agreed to reduce their interest on the State Debt held by them from 6 to 5 per cent.; and all round the national "credit" was held to stand on a sounder footing than ever before.<sup>1</sup> But it was on the very day of his leaving office that Walpole laid his financial scheme before Parliament, presenting it as a private member, and bequeathing the charge to his successor, who carried the measure through.

There is no question that the honour given to Stanhope in his epitaph in Westminster Abbey is due to Walpole;<sup>2</sup> and so much was made very clear to everybody in the discussions on the Bill; in which Stanhope, avowing his ignorance of finance, was moved to retort on Walpole with an intimation that, if ill-fitted for his post, he was at least careful not to turn his power to the account of providing for his own family. This Walpole had

forced. Thus was the affection of the bankers won. In 1709 Godolphin, again at lowered interest, borrowed nearly four millions from the Bank, and extended its monopoly till 1732. (Anderson's *History of Commerce*, 1789, iii. 28-33.) <sup>1</sup> *Id.* pp. 71-3.

<sup>2</sup> See Ewald, p. 115; and Stanhope's *History*, ed. Tauchnitz, i. 286, note.



certainly done; and his general rejoinder, impeaching a court favourite, was sufficiently irrelevant. But the charge against himself did him little harm; and he took an ample revenge. He was unscrupulous enough to oppose his colleagues in their attempt to repeal the indefensible Schism Act, which when passed by the Tories he himself had vehemently opposed. "So apt," says a weighty critic, with much lenity, "is party spirit to degenerate into moral paradox."<sup>1</sup> "In looking through our parliamentary annals," says Stanhope, who is not wholly unfriendly to Walpole, "I scarcely know where to find any parallel of coalitions so unnatural, and of opposition so factious."

It is here that Walpole helps us to understand Bolingbroke—and Burke. In that episode of revolt he reveals to us the primarily self-regarding man, either angrily resolved to retaliate for a personal attack, to make the king's favourites smart for having dismissed his immediate partner, or deliberately planning to make them feel his own indispensableness. Some byplay of resentment for things said and privately reported seems the only hypothesis on which his course can be explained: his blood was up. The master principle of his whole career was the maintenance of the Hanoverian dynasty, which he had seen seriously menaced in 1715, and knew to be sleeplessly conspired against by the Jacobites abroad and at home; yet he joined hands with Shippen and Windham, the typical Jacobites, to maintain a Jacobite measure. He is not, indeed, fitly to be criticized<sup>2</sup> for voting to reduce the army "when he well knew the country to be in danger of another insurrection, and of invasions both from Sweden and from Spain." As the critic soon afterwards records, the ministers themselves shortly recommended a reduction of the army by ten thousand men, and the measure proved "very popular."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lord Morley, p. 55. Compare Ewald, pp. 119–22; and Stanhope, i. 276.

<sup>2</sup> As by Stanhope, i. 276.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 288.



Walpole probably knew what was coming. But his course in other respects was one of pique and passion, reminding us at once of the chronic play of such forces in politics, and of the general restraint that Walpole learned to put upon himself throughout the rest of his life, even after his fall from power. Bolingbroke learned no such lesson: Chatham and Burke did so very imperfectly.

With less show of "paradox," Walpole was able to overthrow the Peerage Bill, a singular measure, designed to limit the number of peers and so prevent the ennobling of the German courtiers whom the heir-apparent had promised to raise to title when he came to the throne. His father eagerly acquiesced in the limitation of the royal prerogative on that head; the existing peers were naturally willing; and the ministers were zealous. But the proposal served Walpole with a theme for a great and telling speech in opposition,<sup>1</sup> as it did Addison for a possibly more disinterested but much less readable essay, and a ground of final rupture with his old friend Steele.

After the rejection of the Peerage Bill (1719) by Walpole's means, he and his former colleagues seem all to have felt they had had enough of feud; and Walpole, with Townshend, actually appealed to be received back.<sup>2</sup> The view that they did so in a spirit of patriotism, fearing that the Whig split was endangering the Whig cause,<sup>3</sup> seems reasonable: there is also a probability that the king privately invited them to make the request. Walpole in 1720 consented to take his former inferior post of Paymaster of the Forces, without a seat in the Cabinet. But in his absence had occurred the fatal transaction with the South Sea Company which has served to make its name memorable in English history, a transaction

<sup>1</sup> See it in Ewald, pp. 118-36.

<sup>2</sup> "A course as mean and unworthy as had been his past proceedings," says Ewald, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Morley, p. 61.



which he had opposed, whether discerningly or not we cannot now tell; and the great financial collapse in which it resulted, by overthrowing his chief rival, Sunderland, now opened a way for his attainment of the highest office. The whole business is so instructive as to deserve a closer study than is now usually given to it.



## CHAPTER VIII

### FINANCE AND CURRENCY

It is not the fact, as is still often assumed, that the South Sea Scheme and those which sprang up around it constituted a new state of things in England, and that Law's slightly earlier Mississippi scheme in France was the first thing of the kind. Schemes for a great monopoly trade with the Spanish West Indies had been mooted even from the reign of James I down to that of William. The South Sea Scheme itself arose some years before Law's. Such phenomena, besides, could only arise out of gradually developing conditions adequate to the results, and the conditions had been growing up for generations. As early as the reign of William III, to say nothing of the (Scottish) African or "Darien" scheme, there had been an abundant crop of "projects" in England: <sup>1</sup> witness the *Essay on Projects* of Defoe,<sup>2</sup> which was written in 1692 or 1693 and published in 1697, and which traces "the original of the projecting humour that now reigns no farther back than the year 1680, dating its birth as a monster then, though by times it had indeed something

<sup>1</sup> See the details in Craik's *History of British Commerce*, ii. 191-2. Compare Macaulay, ch. xx, Student's ed. ii. 478-82. The Bank of England was a Whig "project" which succeeded. Macaulay notes how Dudley North, the most original and far-seeing economist of his time, set his face persistently against the innovation of banking, having lost money by the failure of a banker when persuaded to resort to the new convenience. But the failure in question pointed to the need for a more solid system, and this the Bank of England supplied.

<sup>2</sup> Available in the cheap edition of Cassell and Co., edited by Professor H. Morley.



of life in the time of the late civil war." The "projecting humour" had two main sources: the extension of every kind of scientific and technical experiment which was implied in the rise of the Royal Society; the revival of trade and prosperity after the Peace of Ryswick; and the accumulation of credit capital involved in the extension of trade and the multiplication of bullion, which meant increased demand and production.

A general rise of prices from the latter cause had been progressing in England, as in Europe at large, for at least a hundred years;<sup>1</sup> and in the peace of the Commonwealth and the Restoration, English trade had rapidly increased.<sup>2</sup> It is very difficult to disentangle the interacting economic forces and precisely trace results at this distance of time; and it is to be remembered that then, as now, economic conditions of contrary tendency prevailed alongside of each other. In the last eight years of the seventeenth century<sup>3</sup> a series of bad harvests raised wheat prices enormously; but in those years the crop of projects above mentioned was abundant. Presumably they flourished in virtue of an abundance of silver and gold bullion seeking openings; though we find that at the same time the silver coin of the realm was declared to be deficient, and was shown to be abundantly clipped.<sup>4</sup>

This very drawback was the work of the bullion-brokers; and the resulting operation of the replacement

<sup>1</sup> See Cliffe Leslie's essay on "The Distribution and Value of the Precious Metals in the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" (*Macmillan's Magazine*, August, 1864: rep. in *Essays in Political and Moral Philosophy*, p. 264). Compare Del Mar, *Money and Civilization*, 1886, ch. xiii. Del Mar's thesis is that prices in the north of Europe rose generally only after the northern States had begun to plunder Spain as Spain had plundered America.

<sup>2</sup> See Child's *New Discourse of Trade* (1665-90), 4th ed., pref. pp. 36-8, or citations in Craik's *History of British Commerce*, ii. 80 sq.

<sup>3</sup> Strictly, the years 1692-9. See Baker's *Records of the Seasons*, etc., 1883.

<sup>4</sup> Craik, ii. 129.



(1696-7) of the entire coinage, "the mightiest financial operation that had yet been achieved or undertaken in England,"<sup>1</sup> was partly in their interest. The reason given for this operation was the extensive clipping of the silver coinage; but the clipping, an old difficulty, was probably aggravated by reason of the falling value of silver relatively to gold, the holders of silver coin taking this means to protect themselves, while the currency of a number of clipped coins at face value led to the clipping of the rest of the old hammered money.

The successive devices of William's government to grapple with this trouble are striking illustrations of the impotence of legislators in face of a problem they do not fully understand. England, having passed by reason of her dynastic change from the state of war with her great commercial prototype and rival, Holland, was now, in the peaceful pursuit of that rivalry, evolving rapidly on the Dutch lines. Every year she became more of a trading State, and every generation the commercial element in her politics tended to become more obtrusive and more perplexing. A natural result, in the then state of economic science, was the output of countless schemes, nearly all bad, for active governmental interference with trade, on the usual assumption that an annual surplus of imported bullion in return for an annual surplus of exported commodities was the end to be attained.

Thus we have Locke,<sup>2</sup> on the pressure of Somers and other "great men,"<sup>3</sup> bringing his sound common sense to bear critically on the revived proposals<sup>4</sup> for a legal reduction of the rate of interest—one of the first thoughts of empirical reformers in all ages—and on the plans for

<sup>1</sup> Craik, ii. 131.

<sup>2</sup> See his "Consequences of the Lowering of Interest and Raising the Value of Money," and other papers (1691-5), available in a cheap reprint (Ward Lock and Co.).

<sup>3</sup> Rep. cited, p. 311.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* p. 273.



preventing the re-export of silver by doing something to the coinage. Despite a certain leaven of the ordinary belief in the pre-eminence of bullion,<sup>1</sup> he holds by the main verities developed later by Harris, Hume, Quesnay, and Smith;<sup>2</sup> and he undoubtedly helped Somers and his colleagues to avoid the worst pitfalls of the mercantilism of the age. But neither action nor inaction on the part of the rulers could prevent the rise of the diseases of mercantilism in a mercantile epoch; and the new England of the constitutional monarchy presents, one after another, all the plagues that self-seeking can set up in the organism of an industrial State. Spain, enthralled by the ancient dream of gold, imported yearly a vain treasure, wrung forth by slave labour. England, infected by the same delusion, clutched feverishly at the same spoil.

But in England, as in Spain, individual self-interest was always frustrating the collective ambition. "It is death in Spain," wrote Locke, "to export money; and yet they, who furnish all the world with gold and silver, have least of it among themselves. Trade fetches it away from that lazy and indigent people." It was not so: the bullion left Spain because the excess of it made itself cheap and other things dear; and the surplus would equally have gone out had the Spanish been as industrious as the Dutch. And as Locke himself admitted, the amount in excess over the practical need equally passed out of England.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thus, even in combating the ordinary delusion, he writes (p. 226): "Riches do not consist in having more gold and silver, but in having *more in proportion than the rest of the world*, whereby we are enabled to procure to ourselves a greater plenty of the conveniences of life." This is just the odd fallacy over again; and the case of Spain, to which Locke alludes elsewhere, is partly misconceived and misstated by him (p. 268).

<sup>2</sup> As Macaulay notes, he entirely avoided Smith's error of justifying a legal restriction of interest.

<sup>3</sup> He put this down (pp. 281, 301) to the need of paying the balance of trade against England in other countries, not realizing



Certain traders gloried in the trade with Spain and Portugal because they got from it the bullion which Spanish and Portuguese traders found it profitable to trade off. But in England, from a variety of causes, it did not even appear that the expected use of this bullion as coin was attained. It filtered off in unseen ways; and despite the claimed favourable "balance of trade," England had come to have the most clipped and beggarly silver coinage of all the leading European States. It was the old story of bad money driving out good. The good milled money,<sup>1</sup> turned out without charge at the Tower from about the time of the Restoration, was hoarded or melted, or exported as fast as it was made; and the Mint must have served the bullion-brokers mainly as a convenience in certifying weight and quality for export. The evil, of course, was partly illusory or sentimental; but even Locke, while supplying the argumentative proof that money inequalities adjust themselves in practice, is possessed by the feeling that the clipping of money is a national calamity, beside which the series of bad harvests is a negligible drawback.<sup>2</sup>

The worst evil was not the clipping, but the frightful methods taken to prevent it. "Hurdles, with four, five, six wretches convicted of counterfeiting or mutilating

that it would go as a commodity wherever there was a paying demand for it, in goods.

<sup>1</sup> McCulloch's *Treatises on Economical Policy*, ed. 1859, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Macaulay (Student's ed. ii. 544-5) goes much further, and suggests that all the evils wrought by misgovernment in a quarter of a century were not equal to "the misery caused in a single year by bad crowns and shillings," by derangement of trade. This is absurd. Trade would of course be hampered, but not to the extent asserted; and it had always been hampered to some extent in the same way. But Macaulay is to be praised for having seen the fitness of dealing with the subject at length; and his narrative is excellent, though incomplete. As to the trouble caused by high corn prices, it seems to have been the prevailing view, as it was that of Petty, that high prices made the poor work more, while low prices made them lazy. See the citations of Schulze-Gävernitz in his *Der Grossbetrieb*, 1892, p. 2 *sqq.*



the money of the realm, were dragged month after month up Holborn Hill. One morning seven men were hanged and a woman burned for clipping."<sup>1</sup> All the while the money-mongers grew rich by trading in the good silver, taking in new or old by weight, and paying out old by tale; and what they did not export was doubtless in large part hoarded, in a period when half the population feared a fresh upset of the throne. Much, however, probably found its way to India and China, which in 1717 we find specified as a great market for silver, permitting of "vast exportations" of silver, which bought gold.<sup>2</sup> The scarcity of good silver naturally led to the increasing use of gold, which from this time onward began to be the "standard" metal. The first coining of guineas, so called because made of Guinea gold, was in 1663; and by 1696 it was computed there had been coined over seven millions.<sup>3</sup> These remained in circulation because, they having the higher purchasing power relatively to silver, it had never been profitable to export them; and in 1695, when their value rose to 30s., there was an "inundation of them."<sup>4</sup> All the more was the silver melted, sent as bullion to Holland and elsewhere, and used to buy more gold.<sup>5</sup>

All this was ascertained by the House of Commons, which received from the Mint a list of the names of those who had had gold coined; and after laws which had encouraged clipping in the teeth of other laws to put it down, came laws to prevent bullion-dealing and exportation. Whichever way the rulers turned, they were either reproached or baffled. They had begun by way

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay, p. 543. Of course, the majority of the clippers escaped, since constables were loath to arrest and juries to convict.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, *Annals*, iii. 74 (Macpherson, iii. 56).

<sup>3</sup> "A Review of the Universal Remedy for all Diseases incident to Coin"—"In a Letter to Mr. Locke," 1696. This author ascribes to Locke "the ground of all that I am capable to say."

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* pp. 7, 11, 21.

<sup>5</sup> The transaction yielded "above 30 per cent. profit." (*Id.* p. 23.)



of relieving the general public, enacting in 1692 that receivers of State revenue should be bound under penalty to receive "any sort of cracked money" of the realm, so that "their majesties' good subjects" should not suffer hardship.<sup>1</sup> Here was a new and direct incitement to clipping, and more money was clipped than ever, the Government having provided a market for it.<sup>2</sup> At every turn the money-mongers were there to make their profit out of national inconvenience and individual loss; and the two-and-a-half millions which it cost the revenue to renew the coinage went substantially into their pockets.

Even when the currency of clipped money was thus checked, the new money was exported to buy gold, so that a stop to gold-coining and importation had to be made for over a year.<sup>3</sup> Then the money-mongers tried the plan of holding back the coin and paying in bills and notes, "given out by goldsmiths and others, and in the last place by the Bank of England";<sup>4</sup> and silver coin seemed for a time as scarce as ever, the dealers having to be threatened with prosecution to make them pay.<sup>5</sup> And even after the old money had been made illegal, and could only circulate by weight, the place of the new was largely taken by these notes and by fresh importations of gold. "After this, in the year 1700, there was such vast quantities of French gold in the nation that the whole trade was in a manner carried on with that coin."<sup>6</sup> It had continued to be a paying business to import gold and export silver; and the importation of gold meant the multiplication of stockjobbing "projects."

<sup>1</sup> Craik, ii. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Leake, *Historical Account of English Money*, 3rd ed., 1793, p. 391.

<sup>3</sup> From March 2, 1695, till January 1, 1696—continued till April 10. (Leake, p. 393.)

<sup>4</sup> *Review of the Universal Remedy*, etc., p. 31. The Bank, as Macaulay notes, could not at first get the new coin fast enough to make the payments called for by the speculators.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Leake, p. 397.



Such were the new forces at work in the new era ; such the interests and egoisms rising up to complicate or take the place of dynastic and religious prejudices. Between the rapacities of vulpine trade and the credulities of the ignorant, rapacious without knowledge, there was being prepared for society a new disease, and for statesmen a new problem.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE

IN its inception, the South Sea Scheme was a device of statesmen as much as of traders. It was in fact a primitive scheme of State-trading; and it was the device of a typically Tory Government, professedly anxious to pay off Whig debt. Its failure undoubtedly put such schemes in permanent discredit. Had it succeeded, it would infallibly have been followed by others.

The plan had been set on foot as early as 1711, when the Tory minister, hard pressed to find money for the continuation of the war, and pressed as hard by the outcry of the Tory squirearchy—whose objection to the then heavy land tax was their strongest reason for demanding a peace—threw out promises of a new way to pay national debts, of which the honour was to redound to Harley, but of which the initiative was due to the much-projecting Dr. Hugh Chamberlayne,<sup>1</sup> generally known as a “man midwife” and as the founder of the Land Bank.<sup>2</sup> Chamberlayne’s original plan was to conquer and colonize part of South America, setting up a monopoly trade in rivalry with the Spanish.<sup>3</sup> Harley and his colleagues leaned to the scheme from the first in terms of their professed view that France was kept going in the war only by her imports of specie from South

<sup>1</sup> Defoe, who wrote a pamphlet in its support, is also credited with suggesting the South Sea Scheme to Harley. See W. Lee, *Daniel Defoe, His Life and Recently Discovered Writings*, 1869, i. 179–80.

<sup>2</sup> See Macaulay, ii. 481.

<sup>3</sup> *Memoirs of Queen Anne*, p. 115.



America ;<sup>1</sup> but when they decided not to push France over-hard they naturally dropped the idea of aggression in that quarter, sending the utterly futile expedition to Canada instead.<sup>2</sup> They, however, constituted the South Sea Corporation out of the holders of the floating debt of the nation, then amounting to £9,471,325, allotting to the Corporation certain specified public revenues—raised on wines, tobacco, “candles, clerks, apprentices, and servants”<sup>3</sup>—to amount in all to £568,279, and so pay 6 per cent. on the stock ; and at the same time granting to the concern, from August 1, 1711, onwards, the sole right of trading with South America on the east, and with all America and the South Seas on the west, including the possessions of Spain, but excluding Brazil and other Portuguese possessions, and Dutch Surinam.

The idea was that the revenue from this trade should first relieve and eventually meet the burden of interest on the debt ; and the expectation was that the peace to be made with France and Spain would permit of a South Sea trade with boundless profit. At the same time they were to undertake fishing—for whales, chiefly. The Peace of Utrecht, yielding only the scanty and unprofitable privilege of the slave trade, and of the entry of one ship yearly to Acapulco, made this project virtually a dead letter.<sup>4</sup> The Company's first ship, launched in

<sup>1</sup> Bolingbroke argues (*Study of History*, Letter viii) that England and Holland ought to have “hindered the French from going to the South Sea,” whence they annually imported much specie during the war. “With this immense and constant supply of wealth, France was reduced in effect to bankruptcy before the end of the war. How much sooner must she have been so, if this supply had been kept from her !” Bolingbroke here held by the economics of his age. He did not suspect that mere import of bullion could only raise prices all round.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of Queen Anne*, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Abstract of the Act, published in 1718.

<sup>4</sup> Some trade must have been done with South America by English merchants through Spanish agents, as was done even by



1715, did not sail till 1717.<sup>1</sup> A second was launched in 1718, but to no purpose, for in that year war broke out with Spain on her invasion of Sardinia, and Alberoni seized all British goods and vessels in Spanish ports. Still, the allocation of public revenue made the Company for the time a prosperous institution enough; in 1715 its stock was increased by fresh State debt to ten millions; and in 1717 the Whig Government, carrying out the Act framed by Walpole, arranged with its directors a further settlement of debt and interest. The proprietors of certain short annuities, with twenty-three years to run, were allowed to subscribe their value at eleven-and-a-half years' purchase into the Company's stock at 5 per cent. The total stock, with an advance from the State of over half a million, was now increased to £11,746,844. This step was taken in connection with Walpole's scheme of a sinking fund, above described. Thus far nothing had been arranged with the South Sea Company but the passing over of so much National Debt into the nominal capital of the concern, and the granting to it of so much public revenue to pay the interest, in the hope that one day the interest would be lightened by means of the Company's trade operations. It was in 1719 that there was set on foot a new and vast project of transferring to the same Company the remainder of the National Debt,

the Dutch. See Samber's *Memoirs of the Dutch Trade*, Eng. trans., 2nd ed. 1719, p. 89. But the South Sea Company does not appear to have tried this plan. Yet it was known that the former "asiento" contracts of the French and Portuguese to supply slaves to Spanish America had been losing transactions; and the arrangement of the Acapulco ship was almost farcical, the king of Spain being entitled to a share in the profits, while Queen Anne claimed a fourth part, besides granting  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. to the Spanish agent at her court. Later the queen, or her ministers, proposed that  $21\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. of the clear profits should be divided among Bolingbroke, Moore, and Lady Masham. (Anderson, iii. 62, 267.) This was surrendered, it seems, before it was recognized to be worthless.

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, *sub ann.*



with a further temporary assignment of revenue, in return for which privilege the Company was positively to pay to the State a sum of seven-and-a-half millions. The transaction is on the face of it unintelligible<sup>1</sup> save on the view of Hume, that the directors, who knew better than anybody how little was to be made from the South Sea trade,<sup>2</sup> deliberately counted on making the money by selling to the public, at high premiums, the fresh stock they received permission to issue, and on which

<sup>1</sup> Professor Jenks writes (*Walpole*, p. 21): "I hesitate very much to attempt any account of a transaction which involves a summary of the appalling prolixity of the South Sea Act of 1719, and the more so, that I observe that historians, even those who profess to deal specially with economic matters, glide round the subject with discreet vagueness, or shirk it altogether." The criticism is just. No modern writer known to me gives a complete, lucid, and accurate account of the South Sea Company. Mr. Jenks himself dates the original Act 1710 instead of 1711, and overlooks the transactions of 1715 and 1717, though he grasps the situation of 1719 very intelligently. Stanhope and Lecky both leave a reader puzzled; and the smaller histories hardly attempt any explanation. Professor Rogers, who clears up matters to some extent in his *Industrial and Commercial History of England*, divides his narrative so irregularly (chapters iv and vi) as to leave needless room for confusion; and, while complaining that most historians "very imperfectly understood the facts," himself entirely overlooks the arrangements of 1715 and 1717, planned by Walpole, and shows he is unaware that Walpole opposed that of 1720. He further speaks, as does Coxe, of Law's scheme as if it had collapsed in 1719 (pp. 75-6). Ewald, noting points which other writers overlook, omits important details as to the Act of 1717. Lord Morley makes no mention of it and says little of that of 1720. The older narratives, as Coxe's, mostly lack lucidity. The best is Anderson's. An exact narrative, free of technical jargon, is much needed.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Morley rightly observes (p. 63) that "while Law was a man of genius and by no means without sincerity and even elevation of character, in London the promoters were little more than ordinary stockjobbers with extraordinary rashness, audacity, and corruption." As to Law's real merits, see Professor Shield Nicholson's *Money and Monetary Problems*, 2nd ed. 1893; P. A. Cochet, *Law, son système et son époque*, 1853; and Thiers, *Histoire de Law*, 1858.



they knew they could not pay interest save out of capital.<sup>1</sup> The avowed theory was that their credit would so rise as to enable them soon to lower the interest on the Debt all round to 4 per cent., and ultimately to pay it all off by a sinking fund.

It is significant of the state of financial knowledge at the time that in the parliamentary discussion on the project nobody seems to have pointed to the obvious impossibility of success in the absence of a special and good source of revenue, which the Company entirely lacked.<sup>2</sup> The Bank of England, which had a real revenue through its monopoly, competed with it for the privilege of the transaction; and thus it was that the Company was led to raise its offer to the huge sum of seven-and-a-half millions. Walpole and others seem to have taken the line that the Bank and other Companies should be allowed to share in the business;<sup>3</sup> but the ministers had determined, for solid considerations, to give it to the South Sea directors; and to them, in 1720, it was finally given.

The results have been told a hundred times. The promoters went to work to inflate the stock; and to this end they floated all the necessary rumours as to new developments in the South Seas—a Spanish cession of gold mines in Peru, in exchange for Gibraltar, being the

<sup>1</sup> "The ground fallacy was that the Company was not limited in the price they were to put on their stock." (Anderson, iii. 94.) But they really did get high premiums for the stock, so that there was no great "fallacy" there. The crux was the interest.

<sup>2</sup> At least, if this argument was urged, it was bracketed with others of no real force.

<sup>3</sup> Earl Stanhope has pointed out that Coxe was drawing on his fancy when he made Walpole at the beginning of 1720 point to the ruin caused by Law's scheme in France. Law's scheme was then in the height of its glory, and was the first incentive and exemplar to the South Sea promoters. The Mississippi collapse began with the *arrêt* of 21st May, reducing the value of bank notes by a half, and lowering that of stock from 9,000 to 5,000 livres per *action*. As no such step was contemplated in England, the public there could still be confident.



most effective announcement. Never before, save in the slightly previous "boom" of Law's Mississippi scheme in France, had such a public offered itself for exploitation; and never again, probably, will such a public be found.<sup>1</sup> Here was a conception of social economy on a par with the whole life-philosophy of the Middle Ages: a notion of commercial and financial possibility which broadly compared with the geocentric theory of the universe, or the dream of perpetual motion. All the vast and age-long prestige of the bullion delusion seemed to be concentrated for a few months to serve as motive force for a nation's delirium. The new abstract commercialism, so different a thing from industry, a thing half conscious gambling and half conscious piracy, had so far penetrated the nation that the gulls, as anxious in their way as the jobbers to be rich for nothing, outnumbered the wildest estimates of previous projectors.<sup>2</sup> Commercial Europe lent a hand; South Sea stock was bought in Switzerland, in France, in Holland, in Hanover; impossible dividends were announced; and, as the histories tell, the stock went up to a premium of ten times its real amount.<sup>3</sup>

Of course it did not need, for the collapse of such a bubble, the interference of the South Sea directors with the horde of unauthorized projectors who were thriving with them on the folly of the multitude. Their natural indignation at the presumption of the smaller swindlers, however, led them to obtain writs putting a stop to such plagiarism; and the vibration set up by the snapping

<sup>1</sup> The railway manias of the decade 1840-50 are among the nearest subsequent parallels.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson (iii. 103-12) gives a valuable list of the great and small "bubbles" of the time, showing the prices reached by a number of the stocks. Under fifteen heads he enumerates ninety-five separate projects, to which are added a miscellany of seventy-five more. Some of these ran as high as two, three and four millions. One scheme was "for building of hospitals for bastard children"; another "for a wheel for perpetual motion."

<sup>3</sup> The highest figure reached was £1,060 for £100 scrip.



of the small bubbles soon began to shake the large. Promises to pay an enormous dividend for the year delayed the collapse but a little. A rapid and ruinous fall in the prices of the stock at the end of September, 1720, set up a storm of terror and rage on the scale of the preparatory frenzy; the army of losers roared for help and vengeance; the rulers stood helpless; and in the absence of the king in Hanover it seemed even possible that there should be another revolution.

This was Walpole's great opportunity. He was the one leading Whig with a financial reputation who was not involved officially or financially in the disaster; and the knowledge that he had himself traded in South Sea stock and sold out when the figures reached £1,000 would go far, with those who knew, to establish his credit for sagacity. The cry for his help secured his recall to office upon the return of the king in November; and where his former colleagues went down before the storm, he figured alone, as the saviour of the country. The situation to which he came was one with which a less able man could have dealt; and, indeed, it appears that his final plan was suggested to him by an outsider. His first expedient actually failed, and deserved to do so. It was to induce the Bank of England to subscribe three-and-a-half millions, taking Company's stock at the price of 400 per cent.: the sum to be repaid next year; an arrangement which the Bank, after agreeing to it, wisely reconsidered and renounced. Next he carried a measure grafting nine millions of South Sea stock—that is, chiefly National Debt—on the capital of the Bank of England, and nine millions more on that of the East India Company, leaving the capital of the South Sea Company at twenty millions. Then he carried yet another bill, forgoing five of the seven millions to be paid by the Company, and leaving two millions still due, which sum also had finally to be remitted to the clamouring shareholders, who were further appeased by the plunder of the confiscated estates of the directors.



Altogether, his management of the case exhibited no special inspiration, and was even dangerously vacillating. But any arrangement which partly pacified the wailing stockholders and "restored credit" was sufficient to make the prescriber pass with the majority for a master of State medicine.

By many writers the Bubble is still described as a national calamity.<sup>1</sup> It really represented only a very rapid transference of riches from certain thousands of persons to certain other thousands—or hundreds; and the suffering caused was nothing more than passed unnoticed every year among the poor. The dramatic fashion of the trouble, however, and the fact that it fell upon many who had never before known distress, made it seem the dreadfulest of disasters in the eye of a society which regarded the wellbeing of the well-off as the measure of national prosperity. So, despite the appropriate libels and protests, Walpole's solution of the clamorous problem put him at once and permanently at the head of English affairs, as a man fitted to rule a commercial nation. His rivals had been swept away. The shifty Sunderland, who was discredibly implicated in stock transactions, had to resign, and Walpole became First Lord. Stanhope, though innocent, was virulently assailed, and while indignantly defending himself in the House (February, 1721) fell down in a fit, dying the next day. Aislaby, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the parliamentary author of the scheme, having acted corruptly, was put in the Tower as a criminal and his property confiscated. Craggs, the second Secretary of State, took small-pox and died, and his father, the Postmaster-General, took poison. It was a clean sweep, though not clean enough to appease the fury of the virtuous parliamentary opposition, which took up the question with all the ferocity that the generation was wont to put into its political quarrels. The blind greed

<sup>1</sup> Craik puts the case in its true light. (*History of British Commerce*, ii. 194.)



of the gamblers of yesterday was transmuted into a rage of resentment on the same moral plane ; and all Walpole's balance and solidity were needed to make the majority content with confiscating the estates of the directors and the leading parliamentary promoters.

As it was, he was charged with all sorts of corrupt motives in respect of every arrangement he attempted. He had taken up for life the trade of "power," of which the law was and is that the victor shall carry his fortune in his hand, as the forest priest of Nemi carried his life, on the watch against all possible assailants, as all are on the watch against him. In England men profess to fight in this as in other matters by "the rules"; but no rule has yet been framed which avails to make political strife scrupulous, albeit there are many grades of ungenerosity. And so long as power is visibly sought for its own sake, as it ostensibly was by Walpole, it is a matter of course that the holder stands to be ousted by attacks proceeding on no better motive. What concerns us here is to note how Walpole, for the better part of a generation, guarded the golden bough.



## CHAPTER X

### WALPOLE'S PROBLEMS: ENGLAND, IRELAND, SCOTLAND

THE first new step in policy taken by Walpole puts him at once in the line of reforming statesmen, a character not to be ascribed to him over a very large field, but earned by him at this point in a high degree. He was the first of the free-traders in the catalogue of English premiers. Seeing trade fettered at every turn not only by import but by export duties, he inserted in the first King's Speech that it fell to him to draft (1721) a recommendation to the Commons to remove or lighten those fetters. "I promise myself," he made the King say, "that by a due consideration of this matter the produce of these duties, compared with the infinite advantages that will accrue to the kingdom by their being taken off, will be found so inconsiderable as to leave little room for any difficulties or objections." Walpole certainly did not break the tradition, long afterwards denounced by Cobbett, of making the king talk poor English; but seldom had the official document propounded better matter.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The export duties on woollen goods had been taken off in 1700 (Chalmers, *Estimate*, ed. 1794, p. 408) and the export of British linen had been made duty-free in 1717 (*Id.* p. 107); but, as Lord Morley notes, Walpole's measure was the first definite pronouncement of free trade principles by an English statesman. It is sometimes claimed that the credit of the reform should go to Bolingbroke in respect of his Treaty of Commerce with France at the Peace of Utrecht. But Bolingbroke's latest panegyrist avows that Walpole's reform of the tariff was "a measure far in advance of his age, and truly farseeing and statesmanlike." (Sichel, *Bolingbroke and His Times*, ii. (1902) 179.) And Bolingbroke fiercely denounced it!



His biographers have a right to complain that those critics who associate Walpole only with corruption and inertia pay heed neither to the hindrance he met with in his efforts for real reform in administration nor to what he actually achieved, as here. Stanhope, busy with the Jacobites, has not a word of mention of Walpole's great fiscal reform, a thing of far more importance, as matters turned out. Even Adam Smith does not touch on the subject, though Dean Tucker had pronounced Walpole the best commercial minister England ever had, having found her rate-book the worst and left it the best in Europe. Walpole's reform gave free importation to 36 articles of raw material formerly taxed, and freedom of export to 106 articles of manufacture formerly prohibited. Coming just after the South Sea disaster, when the nation was overclouded with despondency,<sup>1</sup> the reform, by cheapening many goods and promoting exports, must have done much to revive trade; and though in the same year there was passed an Act to establish workhouses with some species of labour test for recipients of poor relief, Lord Molesworth, in one of the gloomy utterances common in the period, speaks of a scarcity of men for labour, which suggests a reasonable amount of employment. Joshua Gee, the protectionist, writing eight years later, laments the decay of trade in the usual protectionist manner; but Erasmus Philips, in his *State of the Nation*, published in 1725, while citing the laments of the pessimists, testifies to general prosperity, good employment, diffusion of wealth, a low rate of interest for money, increase of exports and shipping, and high prices for land.<sup>2</sup> The new policy set on foot a commercial development which strengthened Walpole's hands throughout his career and determined

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, as cited, ii. 25. It was doubtless the general lethargy, and the high repute of Walpole at the moment, that enabled him to carry through so great a reform without resistance.

<sup>2</sup> Chalmers, as cited, pp. 105-8, following Anderson's *Commerce*, 1787, iii. 155-6.



more clearly England's new destinies. But it did not avert any of his political difficulties or secure him any notable gratitude from the trade interests which he had so signally served.

The dangers besetting the post of first minister under George I were endless. There were perils from the court and from the "country party," perils from false brethren, perils of the city, perils from the Gentiles and the Jacobites, perils of shipwreck over unlucky measures; against all which there was needed skill and travail and much watching, not to speak of expenditure. Scarcely was Walpole seated in his place when intrigues were set up against him by his colleague Sunderland, the able and shifty son of an able and shifty father, one of the troop of ambitious and brilliant nobles that had figured so abundantly in English politics since 1688. Never, perhaps, were English aristocrats more interesting than in the age when the House of Lords was Whig; and yet seldom had they carried off fewer of the main honours of the political situation. The brilliance, the distinction, the social influence and much of the show of power, were theirs; but the really ruling and guiding men were commoners born; and against the brilliant array of Sunderland (third Earl), the intriguer by heredity; Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, whose ambition was such that he "would put all in distraction rather than not gain his point";<sup>1</sup> Wharton, the Don Juan, "a man of great talents but profligate character, and succeeded by a son still more able and still more abandoned than himself,"<sup>2</sup> there stand the far more important names of Somers, the all-accomplished, who rose from the status of a provincial attorney's son to the Lord Chancellorship; Godolphin, the younger son of a Cornish squire; Marlborough, maker of his own fortunes by fair means and foul, the supreme captain and diplomatist of his age;

<sup>1</sup> Marlborough, cited by Stanhope, i. 139. Compare the vivid portrait drawn by Macaulay, chs. xx and xxiv (ii. 460, 704 *sq.*).

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, i. 139. Cp. Macaulay, ch. xx (ii. 462).



and Walpole, who till his day of power was done declined to be more than a knight. That honour he received in 1725, when he revived the ancient Order of the Bath, himself taking the first riband. This he resigned in 1726 for the more distinguished Order of the Garter—a source of much banter and bitterness among his opponents throughout his career.<sup>1</sup> But, himself determined to remain leader of the House of Commons, he had his eldest son raised to the peerage as Baron Walpole in 1723.

The death of Sunderland in 1722 removed a dangerous rival; but at once a new one arose in Lord Carteret, afterwards Earl Granville, a kind of Bolingbroke, with a weakness for wine, the most learned of the splendid tribe of Alcibiades, a fine scholar, a great modern linguist, a diplomatist, a schemer, a hunter of glory, whose one political principle was his personal advancement, and whose one method was personal intrigue and ascendancy. To him had been given the second secretaryship, vacated by the death of Craggs; and he at once made it his business to gain a following among the courtiers and the minor concubines, the mistress-in-chief having been secured by Walpole through Townshend, his brother-in-law. But though Carteret had the unique advantage of being able to talk German with the king, and devoted himself to seconding the king's foreign policy, the weightier interest of Walpole, the unfailing provider of supplies, carried the day,<sup>2</sup> and Carteret was at length transferred (1724) to the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland—a reverse which he took with the elastic humour of his kind. About the same time, Atterbury's Jacobite plot (1722) discovered itself; and here Walpole took a course as impolitic as it was opportunist. Not content with exiling Atterbury, beheading Lords Kenmure and Derwentwater, and confiscating estates, he carried a bill to raise £100,000 by taxing all Catholics and non-jurors.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Young, author of *Night Thoughts*, celebrated the event in an unhappy poem called *The Instalment*.

<sup>2</sup> See the details in Ewald, pp. 161–73.



It could only have been a crude commercial belief that to make a cause unprofitable was the way to make it unpopular—or a further belief that the people in general would applaud any blow at Papists—that inspired such a measure; and its enactment serves to show how little Walpole's later policy of toleration was a matter of original moral conviction, though the outcry it raised taught him that other churches than the State Church had better be left alone.

One trouble met, well or ill, another arose. The heedless egoism of English rule, which century after century had made Ireland nearly as dangerous as miserable, had been in full play since 1688. Protestant rancour, freshly inflamed by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, had made it impossible for William to use the lenity to which he was inclined; and to the amazing penal code levelled at the Catholics were added measures directed indiscriminately at Irish trade. "Racial hate's mysterious wrong," as a minor poet has in our day phrased it, grew up even between Englishmen and the largely English population which since Cromwell's conquest had been settled in Ireland; and the new Protestant Ireland was in a measure alienated as the Catholic Ireland of the past had been, by the insular stupidity which, then as now, blasted the spirit of political union while fighting to the death for the form. It is no exaggeration to say that had the former Irish been utterly extirpated by Cromwell, and the country been resettled solely by English and Lowland Scotch, the spontaneous animal egoism of the English in England would have turned the Anglicized Ireland into a victim and an enemy, just as it did the mixed Ireland of the time of James II and William. The England which lost the American Colonies long afterwards was as yet hardly capable of treating a dependency more sagaciously or decently than did ancient Carthage.

It is open to us to argue that had Walpole been—could he have been—a statesman in the highest modern sense; had he cared for building up a nation as he was



compelled to care for securing a dynasty and a place; had he been capable of foreseeing political developments beyond the chances of the battle for place in his own arena; had he cared for justice and good government with any strong enlightening sympathy, he would have seen in Ireland a sphere for patient and quiet redress of ruinous wrongs. Whether such a statesman could in that age have obtained or retained Walpole's place is another question. We are here considering the ideal course rather than the apparent possibilities. The ideal Walpole, we say, would have seen that his great influence with the landed and trading classes ought to be steadily turned to the gradual removal of the monstrous restrictions put on Irish trade at their behest.<sup>1</sup> Unluckily—for we cannot be sure that under happier circumstances he would not have taken the better course—he was thwarted and worried at an early point in his career by Irish agitation; he was thus put in an attitude of hostility where in another temper he might have acted otherwise; and, following his principle of securing domestic peace at almost any price, he left the Irish problem untouched and unlightened to posterity.

At the very beginning of his premiership he was faced by Anglo-Irish discontent. Swift, barred from English preferment by his ribald defiance of clerical decorum in his writings, had taken to Ireland his gall and his genius; and straightway his profound bias to moral conflict, for once justly at work, set him championing the cause of the Irish population as a whole against their dominating neighbour. It was expressly on behalf of "the English settled in Ireland"<sup>2</sup> that he took up the daggers of controversy; thus supplying one of the many

<sup>1</sup> This policy was probably independent of religious malice; but it is worth noting that in those days the traders of Ireland were to a large extent Catholics. See Petty's *Political Arithmetick*, ed. 1699, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Scott's *Life*, Sect. v. (*Misc. Prose Works* of Scott, ed. 1847, i. 154, *note*.)



confutations of the later pretence that "Irish character" has been the provoking cause of Irish troubles. And his crusade was the more disinterested seeing that from the English or Protestant section he had met with public insult and execration as a Jacobite in his early years in Dublin.

It was in 1720, before Walpole's triumph, that Swift published his "Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish manufactures, . . . utterly rejecting and renouncing everything wearable that comes from England." A thoughtful statesman might have seen in such an outbreak an urgent motive to conciliatory action; but for Walpole, as it happened, Swift was a presumptive Jacobite, whom he had himself denounced as such; and the publication was treated as simply seditious. But though the printer was seized and tried, the jury found him not guilty; and only when nine times sent back by the unyielding Lord Chief Justice did they give a verdict leaving the matter in his hands. Finally, the prosecution was abandoned, the popularity of the pamphlet being too evident; but no attempt was made at curative legislation. And such is the fatality of the mere emotional advocacy of public causes<sup>1</sup> that Swift immediately afterwards, by lending all his satirical weight to the foolish rejection of the project of an Irish National Bank, which he treated as one of the bubbles of the period, helped to prevent the rise of what might have been a great force for the industrial support of Ireland against England.<sup>2</sup>

Then came the burlesque tempest over Wood's halfpence in 1723-4. By one of the jobs characteristic of the age, Wood received a "patent" to supply Ireland with half-

<sup>1</sup> It is an instructive fact that while the old example of Swift in the matter of Wood's halfpence moved those two high Tories, Scott and Croker (see Scott's *Life of Swift*, Sect. v. end), to warm sympathy, yet when Scott later opposed the proposal of the Tory ministry of 1826 to abolish £1 notes in Scotland, Croker was selected as the writer to answer him on the part of the Government. (See *Misc. Works*, as cited, i. 725.)

<sup>2</sup> Craik, *Life of Swift*, 1882, pp. 345-6.



pence and farthings to the extent of £108,000, on consideration of allowing a share of his profits to the Duchess of Kendal, the king's mistress. There was a real need for copper coin in Ireland, the former coinage having been driven out by being undervalued in the currency; bad private coin—then licit in Ireland—circulated in abundance; and England was the usual source of new coin. But the quantity proposed was, in cost at least, far in excess of the need; and the transaction had the aspect of a fraud.<sup>1</sup> Walpole was averse from the business, but had to lend himself to it, in pursuance of his task of maintaining the House of Hanover, with the mistresses of the House. The transaction was entered upon in the fashion of all the English management of Ireland, there being no consultation with even the Lord-Lieutenant or the Irish Privy Council.

Similar things had happened before, but this time even the Protestant Anglo-Irish Parliament was roused to indignation, while the Lord Chancellor went so far as to resign. Of course, especially when Swift intervened with his *Drapier's Letters*, there was small discrimination in the arguments used, and grossly false charges against Wood<sup>2</sup> of debasing the coppers were made part of the pleadings of what was at bottom a protest of a self-governing province against an insolent disregard of its status. Walpole naturally took up the point of the quality of the coppers, which were exceptionally good, and was able further to show that Wood's profits were much smaller than were alleged. But though Carteret, now Lord-Lieutenant, stood by Walpole in Dublin, meeting the stern appeals of Swift, who was his own friend, with courtly deprecation, the Government had again to give way. As before, the printer was imprisoned; but Swift indignantly challenged Carteret on the subject at his own levée; and when the case went

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Craik, *Life of Swift*, pp. 346, 349–50.

<sup>2</sup> Who, however, invited the charge by telling the complainants that the coins were good enough for them. (Craik, as cited, p. 348.)



to trial the jury again refused to convict. Ultimately, a compromise failing, the patent was withdrawn, Wood receiving a compensatory grant for twelve years of £3,000 a year, of which a share doubtless went to the Duchess of Kendal. Walpole henceforth took his cue, which was to let Ireland, in the modern phrase, "stew in her own juice."

He was not, however, left to do so without further challenge. Three years later, Swift proved at least the sincerity of his desire to help Ireland by actually calling on Walpole in London. He may have hoped that Walpole had forgotten how in 1713, when that statesman was already one of the important men among the Whigs, the Dean, with his habitual heedless insolence, had written of him as one of the smallest, in the line—

From Somers down to Craggs and Walpole.<sup>1</sup>

Though Walpole in past years had shown he had noticed the attack by publicly attacking Swift, the latter had not openly retaliated. Lord Peterborough brought about a meeting, preceded by an invitation to a dinner party, and Swift pleaded his cause.

The Dean stated at length (says Scott),<sup>2</sup> the grievances of Ireland, being all that could contribute to render a nation poor and despicable, the nation being controlled by laws to which her legislature did not consent; their manufactures interdicted, to favour those of England; their trade cramped and ruined by prohibitions; the natives studiously excluded from all places of honour, trust, and profit; while the conduct of those to whom the Government was delegated lay under no other check than might arise from their own sense of justice.

But Archbishop Boulter,<sup>3</sup> who managed Irish matters

<sup>1</sup> Works, ed. 1824, x. 398.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Swift*, Sect. vi. p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> As to whose character and policy see Craik, pp. 363–8. His worst sin was the deliberate maintenance of English trade interests to the injury of Irish.



for Walpole, had written to warn him not to listen to his fellow-churchman; and Walpole, without apparently attempting to dispute the facts or meet the arguments, took the evasive line of complaining that the king "derived little revenue" from Ireland<sup>1</sup>—a fact which might very well have suggested to him that the king should mend his methods; and declined to take any action.

Swift, unhappily, was not a convincing advocate. In the matter of Wood's halfpence he had fomented a wild outcry over a mainly formal wrong; the new copper coinage having actually been planned to meet Irish complaints of the badness of the existing currency; and the Irish coinage having come from England in the past. And that was not the only black mark against Swift as a politician. Indeed, if regard be had merely to the quarter from which the appeal came, it is not very surprising that Walpole put aside the representation. Few men of Swift's importance were ever less likely to win a hearing for any cause by the weight of their credit for impartiality. It is the bare truth to say that Swift's advocacy of the cause of Ireland was primarily the outcome not of any active or positive sympathy or philanthropy, for he had none, but simply of his grand gift for strife. It was not that he loved Ireland,<sup>2</sup> but that, living in Ireland, he was infuriated by the action of the Whigs in England, and so found a new channel for that *sæva indignatio* which so enduringly lacerated his heart. "Do not," he cried to Delany, over one of the worst tyrannies of the English Parliament, "do not the corruptions and villanies of men eat your flesh and exhaust your spirits?"<sup>3</sup> But the faculty for rage at the tyrannies of others had not hindered him from urging<sup>4</sup> on his own

<sup>1</sup> See the account of the interview in Swift's formal letter to Lord Peterborough. Cp. Craik, pp. 381-4.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Craik, *Life of Swift*, p. 335; Forster's *Life of Swift*, p. 181; Scott's *Life*, Sect. vi; and Delany's Letter, cited in Johnson's *Life*, end.

<sup>3</sup> Scott's *Life of Swift*, Sect. v.

<sup>4</sup> In the *Free Thoughts on the State of Public Affairs*, written in 1714, though not then published.



party, when in power, an absolute exclusion of dissenters, Whigs, and Low Churchmen from all public offices, civil or military ; and a man who had thus borne himself as a mere faction fighter, who had turned Tory because of lack of patronage from the Whigs, who had attacked other churches than his own with a ferocious ribaldry which put in doubt his belief in his own religion, who seemed zealous for that religion only by way of assailing those who criticized it, and who fought his own Church's bishops<sup>1</sup> as acridly as he did dissenters and freethinkers—such a man was not likely to move the hard sagacity of Walpole to a sympathetic interest in Irish wrongs, especially after such a presentment of them as the storm over Wood's halfpence, the least solid of all Irish grievances.

Walpole could not but see that Swift's judgment, if ever right, was so fortuitously, and that his advocacy stood on no scruple of truth or fairness. He had hotly opposed the project of an Irish National Bank, on no reasonable grounds, before the grievance of Wood's halfpence arose ; and he later resisted bitterly Archbishop Boulter's useful scheme to rectify the exchanges by lowering the value of the Irish gold coinage. He had no just insight into any debatable issue on its practical merits ; and his deliverances on the question of the supply of bullion, smilingly cited later by Hume,<sup>2</sup> touch the extremes of frantic absurdity. The chances are, then, that any representation he made to Walpole was flawed by splenetic unreason. Still, such are the compensations and the frustrations of men's characters, such the incalculableness of their egoism, that the embittered and truculent Swift, to whom Ireland was but the hole for the poisoned rat, where he became the Struldbrug of his own imagination, was almost the one Englishman of his time,<sup>3</sup> after

<sup>1</sup> See Scott's *Life*, Sect. vii.

<sup>2</sup> *Essay Of the Balance of Trade*, par. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Davenant, who had before written on the expediency of encouraging Irish trade, sided finally with the promoters of the bill of 1698 practically prohibiting the exportation of Irish woollen goods. (*Works*, ii. 239.)



Molyneux, who resented in the name of political justice the abominable English oppression of Ireland in trade.<sup>1</sup>

And though the circumstances under notice may explain what would otherwise be an almost unintelligible resistance on the part of Walpole, nothing can alter the fact that he refused what might have been a great opportunity for doing good in Ireland. His determining motive was doubtless prudential: an attempt to safeguard Irish liberties would have roused the anger of English traders, perhaps of English churchmen in general. If we were to judge him by our own standards, in the light of the historic retrospect, we might accordingly impeach him as unworthy of his place. Had he chosen to move in the right way, he might perhaps have conciliated alike Protestants and Catholics there; he would have had on his side, at least as regards the trade question, the terrible pen of Swift; and though he would have irritated the English traders, he might have played against them the landed class, to win whose adhesion to the new dynasty was one of the great objects of his policy. But in his eyes, it would appear, the support of the commercial class was too essential to be put in risk; and he left Irish wrongs unredeemed, as he left the Test Acts unrepealed, on the principle that the stability of the throne was to be sought above all things. Like all the statesmen of his age, he had no more idea of educating public opinion than of risking anything to do justice. The dissenters were mostly traders, and his own supporters; but rather than stir up the Church which had rallied round Sacheverell he steadfastly refused to go through the form of abolishing Tests, thus maintaining a certain consistency with his discreditable course in opposing the repeal of the Schism Act. He passed an annual Indemnity Bill, which kept

<sup>1</sup> This is the more noteworthy seeing that his patron, Sir William Temple, had nakedly declared for the suppression of Irish trade in the interest of the English. *Works*, ed. 1770, iii. 13. (The passages are cited in Newenham's *Inquiry into the Progress of Population in Ireland*, 1805, pp. 40-1.)



the dissenters practically unmolested ; but he would go no further.

And if we are to judge him justly, that is, in the full light of his circumstances, not applying to him a test that no other English statesman in his day could meet, we must admit that he had notable reasons for declining to attempt vital reforms which would rouse the hostility of unscrupulously self-seeking classes. English capacity for riotous folly had abundantly revealed itself in the Sacheverell case ; and the storm over the halfpence in Ireland had supplied one of the many proofs that "oppressed" peoples are not made wiser by their oppressions. If Ireland could go into political delirium over a technical wrong which actually involved a real benefit, what might not the English trade or clerical interests do over a serious attempt to right a serious wrong ? What reason had he found for counting on any kind of public support in political affairs save that spontaneously given by interests or prejudices to those who fostered them ?

Walpole had indeed a lamentable array of grounds for his policy of letting sleeping dogs lie. With all his resolve to be at ease in Zion, he could point to a series of episodes in his administration as showing the facility with which a popular storm could be raised ; though he had also some proof of the success with which it could at times be defied. The most curious was that of the Scottish beer tax. Here again Walpole was brought into trouble by his associates. It was the Committee of Ways and Means of the House of Commons which in 1725 insisted that in Scotland, where there was no malt tax, a duty should be levied on every barrel of ale. A similar proposal had raised a storm in 1713, and Walpole opposed the new motion ; but the majority were against him ; and he had to content himself with managing to reduce the proposed tax from sixpence to threepence. That still sufficed to evoke a furious national protest ; the Scottish brewers banded themselves not to give security for the new duty, and not to brew if it were demanded ; and the



Scottish Secretary of State, the Duke of Roxburgh, a friend of Carteret, secretly fomented the resistance. Walpole had serious apprehensions, but stuck to his guns, insisted on the dismissal of Roxburgh, and put Lord Islay in his place. Scottish traders then, as now, were of a different temper from the Dublin populace; and when the tax was persisted in they prudently gave way.<sup>1</sup> But Walpole had had a new ground for avoiding innovation; and he was yet to have others.

<sup>1</sup> Ewald, pp. 181-5.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE BATTLE OF PARTIES

MEANTIME there came the second crisis of his career. In 1727 occurred the sudden death of George I during a visit to Hanover; and the entire cabal of Walpole's enemies exultantly looked for his downfall. There is a circumstantial story that Bolingbroke had gone far to undermine him even with George I. A visit by (the second) Lady Bolingbroke to England on her own business, in which she was chivalrously helped by Townshend, was used by her to pay court to the Duchess of Kendal (*née* Schulenburg), the chief favourite; and a payment to that lady of £11,000 secured her effectual advocacy of his cause, with the result that in 1723 the exile was allowed to return to England and resume his estates. Even this measure of restoration was intensely repugnant to the leading Whigs; and Walpole, who could hardly reconcile them to it, would never consent to Bolingbroke's further reinstatement in his peerage rights. The great plotter, accordingly, not only began a journalistic campaign with *The Craftsman*<sup>1</sup> (1726), but carried on assiduously his solicitation through the Duchess of Kendal, till at length he prevailed on her to present a memorial from him to the king. George simply handed it to Walpole, who, detecting the means of transit, at once declared to the Duchess his earnest desire that she should prevail on the unwilling king to give Bolingbroke an

<sup>1</sup> This had been preceded by a short-lived weekly called *The Country Gentleman*. Such journals were a feature of the time. Chesterfield ran one entitled *Common Sense*. (Sichel, *Bolingbroke*, ii. 246-7.)



audience. She, taken aback by such tactics, at length consented to make the arrangement, and Bolingbroke was duly received. All that we know of what passed is the king's simple comment to Walpole—"bagatelles, bagatelles." Yet Walpole is said to have believed that Bolingbroke's continued pressure through the Duchess would have ended in ousting him from power, and to have prepared for downfall.<sup>1</sup>

If there had been such a possibility, Bolingbroke was defeated by the death of George I, even as he had been before defeated by the death of Anne. But he had every reason to hope, and he and his coadjutors were confident, that Walpole's downfall would take place on the advent of George II. The trusted minister of the old king had been as such anathema to the son, between whom and his sire there had existed (largely on the score of the son's devotion to the cause of his ill-starred mother, the repudiated and incarcerated Sophia of Zell) the family ill-will hereditary in that line; and among Walpole's enemies the Prince had been duly courted. Counting solely on him, and on his mistress, Henrietta Howard, afterwards Lady Suffolk, whom they had expected to rule her royal lover as the Duchess of Kendal had done hers, they made no account of his wife. But Caroline was as tenacious of her status as she was indifferent about her wifeness; and she it was who, as queen, was to defeat them and secure for her life the supremacy of Walpole, whose capacity her clear judgment had already recognized, and who, reciprocally wise, had not made the mistake of courting the rival influence.

At first, matters went as had been expected. George II duly snubbed Walpole when he brought him the news of his accession, and appointed as his representative Sir Spencer Compton, Speaker of the House of Commons, who had forthwith to appeal to Walpole to draft the necessary Declaration for the Privy Council. Then came

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, *Memoirs of Sir Robert Walpole*, 1798, vol. i, ch. 30; Stanhope, ii. 113. Cp. Sichel, *Bolingbroke*, ii. 266-7.



a comedy rivalling that of Richelieu's one day's disgrace. Learning that Compton proposed to ask Parliament to give the queen an allowance of £60,000, Walpole intimated to a friend of her Majesty that he, in Compton's place, would make it £100,000, besides increasing the king's Civil List. The judicious queen, who had been made aware by her father-in-law of Walpole's mastery in finance, at once realized the situation, and contrived that her consort should appreciate it also. At a levée at which Lady Walpole was being universally cold-shouldered, the queen pointedly greeted her as a friend; she "could have walked upon their heads in returning," as she told her son; the entire planetary system at once readjusted itself; and Walpole was again first minister. Between king and queen, it cost the nation an extra £230,000 per annum.<sup>1</sup>

A statesman with such successes was sure to be well hated; and Bolingbroke, now thrice baffled in his long rivalry with Walpole, carried on with Pulteney and Windham a bitter campaign against him in *The Craftsman*, and in the *Occasional Writer*, intercalated with that. But Walpole was not the kind of statesman to be "snuffed out by an article." He perhaps undervalued literary polemic as much as Bolingbroke overvalued it, knowing how slow was the stream of rhetoric outside to translate itself into votes in the House of Commons. But it was the effect of the pamphlet on *The Conduct of the Allies*, penned by Swift under the guidance of Bolingbroke and Harley, that had enabled those leaders to make the Peace of Utrecht; and it was ostensibly the long years of literary bombardment, unresisted by adequate counter-ing propaganda (though there was some),<sup>2</sup> that ultimately undid Walpole's hold on England. Ostensibly, we say, for the political evolution was one that had been many

<sup>1</sup> In the same way the Tories had nearly doubled the Civil List for George I at his accession, without, however, gaining his favour.

<sup>2</sup> See an account of the paper strifes in the *Critical History of the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole, 1743*—by an opponent.



times repeated in history before the discovery of printing. It was simply the inevitable focusing of enmities against "the king's favourite"—a process not to be averted by any combination of merits in the object. It gives us the problem of early statecraft in little. Men being always competitive in their classes, though some classes were long subordinate as such, there has always been rivalry for power. If the king takes it all on himself he becomes the "tyrant," open to attack as such by the venturous; and when he is constitutionalized, his first minister is ill-seen by all who want his place, and by most of the discontented whose affairs are in any way open to his influence. And every President of the United States can point the same moral.

Of history in general, Walpole himself said, when in his last years his son proposed to read some to him, "I know it must be false"—a saying more pregnant than it is generally understood to be.<sup>1</sup> But one of the historical truths we need not doubt is that any minister holding office as Walpole did would have been bombarded in the same fashion. Even the modern machinery of the Cabinet, with separate ministerial responsibilities, and with the habit of deferring to Parliament, never averts the drift of malicious aspersion against a Liberal premier. It is really the main count in the critical indictment of Bolingbroke that so much of the political polemic which filled his latter years is a mere personal campaign against his rival;<sup>2</sup> and that his parade of "principles" is merely a matter of exciting animus against the administration in power. The "Patriot King" of his later "Idea" was to be Prince Frederick, the one thorough fool and

<sup>1</sup> He evidently meant that from his knowledge of his own age he could deny that knowledge of inner facts was generally divulged to the world.

<sup>2</sup> See the prefatory epistle of the *Occasional Writer*, rep. in Bolingbroke's *Collection of Political Tracts*; the Dedication to the *Dissertation on Parties*, and that to "Oldcastle's" *Remarks on the History of England*. These are all written to, and at, Walpole.



rascal in the Hanoverian line from George I to George IV. There were really no principles in the case. None of his assailants wanted legislative reforms which Walpole refused. To-day, the rival parties oppose each other in terms of measures, policies, programs—of course resorting to personal aspersion, even in public, when an opportunity is supposed to offer (witness the “Marconi” campaign of recent years), as well as normally in private. In Walpole’s day, when there were no programs, the Opposition, of course, demanded a war when the mob did and the minister resisted; and they fiercely denounced any new measures of taxation he might attempt; but the anti-Walpoleans were no more reformers than Walpole was. 24

Macaulay has two amusingly inconsistent passages on the issue raised by Lord Mahon’s<sup>1</sup> theorem of the identity of modern Tories with old Whigs, and the converse. In the first passage, reviewing Mahon’s book on the War of the Succession in Spain, he vigorously derides the proposition, observing that modern Tories are indeed very like old Whigs, being always a century behind the times, and thus latterly at the intellectual and political level of the more enlightened people of the age of Queen Anne; but he as confidently denies that modern Whigs have anything in common with the old Tories. In the second passage, prelude to his second essay on Chatham, he fantastically recites Dante’s vision in Malebolge of the transformation of the serpent into a man and the man into a serpent, and declares that “something like this was the transformation which, during the reign of George the First, befell the two English parties. Each gradually took the shape and colour of its foe, till at length the Tory rose up erect, the zealot of freedom, and the Whig crawled and licked the dust at the feet of power.” The first passage was written in 1833, the year before Macaulay went to India. The second was written in 1844, after he had ripened considerably, served as a

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Earl Stanhope.



cabinet minister under leaders who would not abolish the Corn Laws when some Tories were ready to do so, and had occasion to comment on "the stupid and disgraceful course which our leaders have resolved to take" in backing up Lord Ellenborough, whom Macaulay regarded as gravely endangering British rule in India.<sup>1</sup> He had also been reading the later work of Mahon, dealing with the age of the Georges. Whatever may have been the exact motivation of the rhetorical change of front, the account of the "transformation" of Whigs and Tories in the reign of George I is a literary fantasy.

What Macaulay can have meant by saying further that "there can be no doubt that, as respected the practical questions then pending, the Tory was a reformer, and indeed an intemperate and indiscreet reformer, while the Whig was conservative even to bigotry," it is impossible to guess; and the enigma raises speculation as to the critic's habits of judgment. The Tories' demand for triennial or annual Parliaments—a bad scheme in any case—in the reign of George II<sup>2</sup> was but a move of faction, made in their own party interest, not in that of the nation. At elections they used bribery freely. Nor was this more than an item in the miscellaneous opposition to Walpole, in which Pulteney, Pitt, and Sandys, all Whigs, were as zealous as the Tories. The only "reform" concurrently sought by Bolingbroke and Pulteney and Windham and the first Pitt was to have Walpole out. Their invective against "corruption" was conventional declamation: in Walpole's place they would have played Walpole's part, as Macaulay himself had before expressly contended. "During the century which followed the Restoration, the House of Commons was in that situation in which assemblies must be managed by corruption, or cannot be managed at all."<sup>3</sup> Walpole's political

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Ellis, February, 1843. Trevelyan's *Life*, ed. 1881, p. 436. Cp. p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> See Lecky, ii. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Essay on Horace Walpole's Letters: *Essays*, ed. 1856, i. 275.



“corruption” had consisted, not in wholesale money payments, but in attaching a sufficient number of members to him by official and other preferments and advantages for themselves and their connections. As the majority of seats were “owned” to begin with, such manipulation of votes was but a countervailing of a class interest by a ministerial interest. To have left a grossly non-representative Parliament uninfluenced by crown patronage would have been merely to give free play to the corrupt interests of individuals, borough-mongers, borough-owners, and the dominant landed gentry.

The question of Walpole’s “corruption” has been habitually obscured by rhetoric, and by the standing habit of quoting him as saying that “all men have their price”; when what he really said was—indicating types or groups—“all *these* men have their price.” He spoke whereof he knew; the price was regularly asked. But it was not normally a simple money payment. The strongest indictment against him in this regard is the observation of his own son: “I believe Mr. Pelham would never have wet his finger in corruption if Sir R. Walpole had not dipped up to the elbow.”<sup>1</sup> In point of fact, it was in the providing of rich sinecures for his own family, amounting in all to the annual value of £15,000,<sup>2</sup> that Walpole approximated most nearly to what we should to-day consider personal corruption; and Horace seems to have had no misgivings on that score. But his pose of virtuous critic of his sire is ill-justified by the historic facts, which he either forgot or ignored. The system that he condemned was one passed on in full force to his father by his predecessors. In the first Parliament of George I, with a membership of 550,

<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole, *Memoirs of George II*, i. 235. Cp. the *Letters*, viii. 337; ix. 9, 10. I have always had some doubt whether this sentence had not been a marginal addition made on Horace Walpole’s MS. by another hand; but as there is no evidence to that effect, it must be let pass.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Morley, *Walpole*, p. 130.



there had been 271 who held offices, pensions, and sinecures; and in the first Parliament of George II there were 257.<sup>1</sup>

This system dates from William III, who had been driven to it by the anarchism of his Tories.<sup>2</sup> To charge it upon Walpole, who found it ready made, is to falsify history. Every considerate student admits on retrospect, as Hume, who was personally hostile to Walpole, avowed in 1741, that it was "inseparable from the very nature of the constitution, and necessary to the preservation of our mixed government"<sup>3</sup>—in its then stage of evolution. The Place Bill of 1700, excluding from Parliament every man holding an office or place of profit under the King, or receiving a Crown pension, had to be repealed early in the reign of Anne. "It was indeed incompatible with the working of constitutional government; and if practically enforced would have brought Parliament into hopeless conflict with the executive."<sup>4</sup> When, in the first Parliament of George III, the number of "placemen" in the Commons, apart from officers in the army, had been reduced to 89, it did not mean that ministerial influence had been reduced, or that there was less "corruption." On the contrary, Pelham and Bute had greatly developed the system of direct corruption; and under George III it was carried to lengths at which Walpole "would have stared."<sup>5</sup> As Lord Morley points out, there are only two known cases of actual money payments by Walpole in consideration of votes.<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Erskine May, *Const. Hist.*, 5th ed. i. 374.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 369. Cp. Macaulay, *History*, ch. xv (ed. cited, ii, 147–50). "Nobody," said William to the remonstrating Burnet, "hates bribery more than I. But I have to do with a set of men who must be managed in this vile way or not at all. I must strain a point; or the country is lost."

<sup>3</sup> *Of the Independency of Parliament.* (*Essays*, 1741, p. 89.)

<sup>4</sup> May, as cited, p. 370.

<sup>5</sup> Macaulay, *Essays*, ii. 380. (Second essay on Chatham.)

<sup>6</sup> *Walpole*, pp. 122, 126. The examination of the whole subject by Lord Morley is definitive (pp. 120–38).



simple fact that after his fall a malignantly unscrupulous committee of inquiry produced only a *ridiculus mus* to show for all the preceding moral earthquake<sup>1</sup> is the adequate comment on the Tory journalism of his day which labelled him "the Corrupter."

Sir Robert Peel, who had his due share of *odium politicum*, is not now charged either with practising or condoning corruption; and he was hardly the man to be unduly biased in favour of a Whig statesman, even though his personal attitude to politics was much akin to the opportunism of Walpole. But when Lord Mahon, as historian, began by arguing that Walpole succeeded mainly by corruption, Peel met him with a square challenge to face the historical facts; and Mahon had the candour to make a retraction.<sup>2</sup> The truth is that even those proceedings of Walpole's which are most obnoxious to the modern sense of political decency were in full conformity with the official ethic of his time: <sup>3</sup> so much so that the very sinecures which he bestowed on his family came within the kind of "prescriptive right of property" which was devoutly recognized by Burke.<sup>4</sup>

The sufficient answer to the criticism which conventionally labels and libels him is the question, What statesman of his age will pass muster if he be ostracized? King William? Somers? Godolphin? For some, the first Pitt is a satisfying hero by contrast with the Squire of Houghton; but the hero succumbs also to the comparative test. Pitt, honourably distinguished by his refusal to take public perquisites for himself save by way of a £3,000 pension "for the sake of his family," knew perfectly

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, *History*, ch. vii (ed. Tauchnitz, i. 281).

<sup>2</sup> *History*, as cited, i. 277. Compare Ewald, pp. 457-8, citing Stanhope's *Miscellanies* (1863), where Peel's letters are given in full (pp. 66-80).

<sup>3</sup> Professor Jenks, who thinks the early charge of peculation brought against Walpole by the Tories had a foundation, admits that his way of securing profits for a friend was fully justified "according to the morality of the day" (*Walpole*, p. 18).

<sup>4</sup> Lord Morley, *Walpole*, p. 130.



well when in power that his colleague Newcastle ran their joint Government by exactly the methods that had been employed by Walpole. This again Macaulay admits and affirms.<sup>1</sup> Incidentally he mentions further<sup>2</sup> that Pitt had of his own accord gratified many Tories "with commands in the militia, which increased both their own income and their importance in their own counties." As this was certainly done to secure their political goodwill, it was necessarily "corruption" if Walpole's bestowal of similar boons on Whigs was so.

Once more, the battle between Walpole and his foes during twenty years was a contest for "the golden bough"—not the mere control of public funds, which was not the object of Walpole or Bolingbroke, both men of private means, any more than of the rich Pulteney or of Pitt, but—the control of affairs, the ambition of powerful men capable of such control and eager to command. As to policy, there was no real conflict of ideals. After Bolingbroke's return and pardon, he had not the slightest inclination to plot for Jacobitism; and Pulteney and he could collaborate without a misgiving. Whether he would even have sought further to win church favour by persecuting dissenters is doubtful; and Walpole, as we saw, was equally averse from irritating the clergy by giving dissenters fuller freedom. Neither side dreamt any more of altering the constitution or widening the franchise than of disestablishing the Church. When Macaulay writes<sup>3</sup> that "during many years, a generation of Whigs, whom Sidney would have spurned as slaves, continued to wage deadly war with a generation of Tories whom Jeffreys would have hanged for republicans," he is treating declamation as if it were creed or doctrine. To begin with, a mere literary fashion of quasi-republican sentiment was as common among Whigs as among Tories. "Among other effects of Sunderland's classical reading,

<sup>1</sup> Essay (second) on Chatham, ed. 1856, ii. 364.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 366.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 362.



it had made him a fiery republican. . . . Sunderland's republicanism only meant that the wings of royal prerogative were to be clipped for the benefit of a caste of exclusive patricians."<sup>1</sup> The Tory dialect was equally unreal. Bolingbroke's language about kings in the *Craftsman* letters which were collected as Humphrey Oldcastle's *Remarks on English History* is a sample of the declamation in question :—

A Prince who adds to the national stock has a right to share the advantage he procures, and may add supplies from his people without blushing. But a Prince who lives a rent-charge on the people he governs, who sits on his throne like a monstrous drone in the middle of an hive, draining all the combs of their honey, and neither making nor assisting the industrious bees to make any, such a Prince, I say, ought to blush at every grant he receives from a people who never received any benefit from him.<sup>2</sup>

This, inserted in a panegyric of Edward III, was in a sense written at George II ; and in the collected edition of the *Remarks* <sup>3</sup> we are told in a note to the next Letter, which deals with the subjection of Richard II to his plunder-seeking favourites, that "Mr. Francklin (the printer) was taken up for printing this paper and the preceding one on the reign of Edward the Third ; but no further prosecution has yet been commenced against him on that account."<sup>4</sup> Bolingbroke, who in his day had

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Walpole*, pp. 47, 48.

<sup>2</sup> Letter v., end.

<sup>3</sup> These papers were collected in 1731, and again reprinted in 1734, 1744, and 1752. Chatham recommends them warmly to his nephew.

<sup>4</sup> In the anonymous *Critical History of the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole*, 1743, it is stated that "Odious, expensive and severe prosecutions, fines and imprisonments, and all the artillery of ministerial power have been occasionally made use of" against the press ; but the Francklin case is the only one specified. In 1723, however, one Thomas Payne was fined £100 and imprisoned for a year, for printing four libels against the Government in the *True Briton*, a journal described by the above cited writer (p. 505) as "written by the late Duke of Wharton."



struck one of the heaviest blows ever levelled at the freedom of the press, would in exactly the same fashion have punished any printer or writer who had so reflected on the crown if he were minister, and would probably not have stopped at "taking up" the offender. Walpole let the matter drop precisely because no suggestion of republicanism was intended. Seriously considered, the doctrine that a king is entitled to supplies only when he is securing plunder abroad, serves but to reveal the hollowness of Bolingbroke's political doctrine. It was the merest rhetoric. As Hume put it in 1741, before Toryism possessed him :—

The Tories have frequently acted as republicans, where either policy or revenge has engaged them to that conduct; and there was none of that party who, upon the supposition that they were to be disappointed in their views with regard to the succession, would not have desired to impose the strictest limitations on the crown, and to bring our form of government as near republican as possible, in order to depress the family that, according to their apprehension, succeeded without any just title.<sup>1</sup>

And Hume gives the cue to the formulas of Mahon and Macaulay when he writes that "the Tories have been so long obliged to talk in the republican style that they seem to have made converts of themselves by their hypocrisy, and to have embraced the sentiments as well as language of their adversaries."<sup>2</sup> But there was not a grain of real republican principle among either the Tories or the new Whigs. There is no more memorable proof of the power of political violence to discredit ideals than the disappearance of republicanism from English life after the Restoration. So far did the reaction go that when the aged Ludlow, venerated by a few Whigs as the last of the great rebels, came to London from his Genevan

<sup>1</sup> First ed. of *Essays, Moral and Political*, 1741, p. 135. (Essay *Of the Parties of Great Britain.*)

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 137.



refuge in 1690, on the assurance of some of his old admirers that he might expect a high command in Ireland, "the subject was brought before the House of Commons. The Tory members called loudly for justice on the traitor. None of the Whigs ventured to say a word in his defence"; and he had to fly for his life back to Switzerland, never to return to his native land.<sup>1</sup>

Republicanism as a sincere political doctrine had disappeared from English life. When Hume, professing to cite the arguments of others, writes in 1741 that "the mere name of King commands little respect"; that at any shock or convulsion "the kingly power, being no longer supported by the settled principles and opinions of men, will immediately dissolve"; and that "had men been in the same disposition at the revolution as they are at present, monarchy would have run a great risk of being entirely lost in this island,"<sup>2</sup> he does not believe the proposition, and it stood for no real political potentialities. No public man dreamed of setting up a republic; and there was neither a republican party nor a republican propaganda. The Scottish Fletcher of Saltoun was the last of the republicans generated by the ferment following on the Great Rebellion; and Fletcher—who really had ideals of "reform," including a new land settlement and systematic bondage for the idle poor—died in 1716, neither Jacobite nor Tory. The opposition to Walpole came equally from discontented Whigs like Pulteney, new Whigs like Pitt, and old Tories like Windham and Bolingbroke, sets of men who had no "principle" in common. As Macaulay had earlier declared,<sup>3</sup> "The only cry in which all could join was, Down with Walpole!" And, with the Macaulay of 1833, "We have no reverence for the memory of those who were then called the patriots. We are for the principles of good government against Walpole, and for

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay, *History*, ch. xvi: ii. 130-1.

<sup>2</sup> Essay on *The British Government*, ed. cited, pp. 99-100.

<sup>3</sup> Macaulay, *Essays*, i. 279.



Walpole against the Opposition.”<sup>1</sup> The Macaulay of 1844 was under an illusion, perhaps correlative to his discovery that the Whig is the “sail” and the Tory the “ballast” of the ship of State<sup>2</sup>—a reiteration of the hoary commonplace about “order and progress,” or “order and liberty” as Macaulay chose to phrase it.<sup>3</sup> It was apparently in order to reconcile this conception with the political phenomena of Walpole’s day that there was appended the pleasing parable from Dante. But though Walpole might be conceived as ballast, the “sail”—or wind—furnished by his opponents can by no stretch of fancy be conceived as making either for progress or for liberty. It was simply a demand that the captain should be changed.

Bolingbroke’s *Idea of a Patriot King*, as it happened, was not intended for publication in his lifetime; and he was justifiably furious with Pope for altering and printing it.<sup>4</sup> He well might be, for it contained some of his free-thinking, which he had not proposed to commit to the press save posthumously. Supposing the book, however, to be a distillation of his journalistic polemic against Walpole, it is by Macaulay’s own account a futility. “Bolingbroke’s remedy could be applied only by a King more powerful than the House of Commons,”<sup>5</sup> which would have meant either the Great Rebellion over again or the establishment of an infinitely worse tyranny than Bolingbroke had professed to complain of. The attempt to realize the latter ideal was made by George III,

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay, *Essays*, i. 280.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* Essay on Chatham, ii. 361.

<sup>3</sup> This again is from Hume, *Essay Of the Parties of Great Britain ad init.*, and *Essay Of the Origin of Government*, end. Mill ascribed it to Coleridge, who had it from Burke. It is simply an immemorial commonplace.

<sup>4</sup> Sichel, ii. 384–8. The edition had not been published when Pope died; and Bolingbroke’s own reason for publishing the corrected edition is not made quite clear by Mr. Sichel.

<sup>5</sup> Essay on Chatham, ii. 370. Mr. Sichel’s rejoinder (ii. 365) does not really confront Macaulay’s argument.



with the results we know of. As against that and other plans of sailing, Walpole's is to be judged on his total course; and neither Macaulay nor any one in our own day professes to condemn Walpole for the things he actually did ("corruption" apart), save as regards his yielding to the senseless demand for a war with Spain against his own judgment. That step, we shall see, was the outcome of the system of parliamentary opposition under which Walpole had to carry on his administration; and it is in studying his warfare with that opposition that we best realize his difficulties and his capacity.

It is still commonly charged upon him that he was blindly devoted to power, and "could brook no brother nearer the throne"; that he made an enemy of Pulteney, once his friend, by withholding from him preferment; and that he would not endure the claims of Townshend. But Pulteney in due course proved himself fatally lacking in judgment; and Walpole may be supposed to have discerned this before other people; while Townshend was found an impossible colleague by others than Walpole. If the latter was really jealous of ability in his colleagues, he ultimately paid the penalty; for in the end his colleagues failed him. But the ability which he is supposed to have excluded from his Cabinet is not much in evidence.



## CHAPTER XII

### WALPOLE'S HOME POLICY

ALIKE in his domestic and in his foreign policy, Walpole was thwarted by the folly of the nation and the force of faction in Parliament. On nearly all matters of government, he saw more clearly and sanely than any of his rivals. After his step towards free trade in 1721, though fought by a new protectionist propaganda, he took another statesmanlike step in the next reign by giving a large measure of freedom to the trade of Georgia and Carolina. In 1729 the latter colony was permitted to export its rice to southern Europe<sup>1</sup> without first landing it in England, on condition of the use of British ships only, with no other cargo; and in 1734 the same liberty was accorded to Georgia. "The consequence of both which well-judged laws," says Adam Anderson (who at the South Sea Office was probably already compiling his vast *Historical and Chronological Deduction of the Origin of Commerce*, 2 vols. folio, 1764; 4 vols. 4to, 1787), "has been that our said plantation rice has been preferred to the rice of Verona and Egypt, wherever it is carried."<sup>2</sup> As early as 1733, the rice of Carolina had undersold the Italian in Spain and Portugal.<sup>3</sup>

Walpole had thus shown himself superior to one of the two great economic delusions of his age, that which Adam Smith later assailed with special warmth as "the silly notion" of the "balance of trade,"<sup>4</sup> and at least

<sup>1</sup> South of Cape Finisterre.

<sup>2</sup> Work cited, ed. 1787, iii. 164

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> B. IV, ch. iii, Pt. ii. *ad init.*; ch vi, etc.



partly delivered from the other, the doctrine of monopoly. That he did not go further, and seek altogether to abolish the mother country's monopoly of colonial trade, was probably due to his knowledge that such a step would be fiercely resisted at home. It would not have been surprising, however, if on that head he remained imperfectly enlightened, seeing that Adam Smith, forty years later, used against the monopoly principle one of his worst arguments, which actually struck at his own case. Arguing against artificial monopoly as he argued against bad measures for the promotion of foreign trade,<sup>1</sup> he reiterates many times<sup>2</sup> his false dogma that any capital attracted to colonial trade by the monopoly is "forced from" a more profitable because a quicker trade with Europe. This proposition makes the obviously false assumption—as absurd in its own way as the doctrine of the balance of trade—that the amount of capital is fixed and incapable of expansion. On that view, trade could never expand. Smith himself, in the very process of his fallacious argument against foreign trade, avows that there is usually a *surplus* of yield from land and manufactures, which is new capital. Then this new capital could go into colonial trade without "forcing" any out of any other trade; and if the colonial trade were as unprofitable as Smith affirmed, it would not stay there.

In England, as in all other countries with colonies in that age, men justified monopoly of colonial trade on the very principle which Smith fallaciously employed to disparage foreign as against home trade—that it employed British without helping foreign capital. Taking the colonies as part of the king's dominions, they claimed that it was better to trade with the colonies than with foreign countries. Smith in his day could not master the case so far as to see that his argument against foreign trade really defended the colonial monopoly, save on the point of the slowness of the colonial returns; and

<sup>1</sup> See the author's *Economics of Progress*, 1918, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> B. IV, ch. vii, Pt. iii.



there again he miscarried, taking into account as he did only the time involved, without considering the relative profit, which depended, in his own phrase, on the return to "capital and labour."

Where Smith thus erred a generation later, Walpole might well be partly in the dark. But the steps he actually took reveal him as alive to the fundamental law of reciprocity in commerce; and Lord Morley justly credits him<sup>1</sup> with seeing that the prosperity of the colonies was the very form in which the mother country's gain from them would arise. The more of their own produce they exported, the more they would import of manufactures, chiefly from the mother country. As yet, only Pennsylvania and Massachusetts had any "manufactures" of any account; and these of a simple kind. Both colonies, indeed, built ships for Europe, often selling the ship with its cargo of corn in France, Spain or Portugal; but always "the produce of both is thence sent to England, where it is always laid out in goods and sent home to Pennsylvania."<sup>2</sup> This simple argument, so much better than his own, it never occurred to Smith to use.

That Walpole was able to confer such a benefit on Carolina and Georgia is to be explained by the fact that there was no great entrepôt rice trade in England to resist him. The traders of the mother country could be got to let the colonies sell to foreigners what the home traders did not want to have in their own hands. With an English import duty on corn and a bounty on its export, they did not want American corn; and there was no large shipbuilding industry to resent the building of ships for European countries in the colonies. Such things, accordingly, they were free to sell as they would, provided only that their goods went in British ships. But in tobacco there was a great entrepôt trade, against

<sup>1</sup> *Walpole*, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> *The Importance of the British Plantations in America*, etc., 1731, cited in Knight's *Pictorial History*, iv. 720.



which Smith in the next age laboriously and unconvincingly reasoned ; and when Walpole attempted a reform which threatened the profits of that trade, he failed completely. Nor could he prevent or undo the law of 1721 which prohibited the use of printed calicoes, whether printed at home or abroad, in the interest of the woollen and silk industries.

That legislation illustrates the constant mischievous potency of class interest and class politics, as distinct from the unwisdom of statesmen, who are so often assumed to be responsible for it all. The protected English woollen trade, always embarrassed and always beseeching help, had called forth at the Restoration the masterpiece of Cavalier fiscal policy, the enactment that the dead must always be buried in woollen shrouds ; and this egregious edict, framed in the interests of landowners and the manufacturers who bought their wool, was repeatedly reinforced. Anderson, who found Walpole's policy towards Carolina and Georgia "well-judged," had previously pronounced the woollen-shroud edict "certainly a wise and salutary law, as it is a means of *consuming* a considerable quantity of our slight woollen manufactures," and denounced those who paid £5 to be free to bury their dead otherwise.<sup>1</sup> The prohibition of printed calicoes from India in 1700 was another step of the same kind. They were cheap and popular ; the woollen trade was "languishing" as usual ; and they must be stopped. In due course, the home demand led to the setting up of printing works in England, which dealt with imported blank calicoes ;<sup>2</sup> and the Act of 1721 accordingly forbade these also, throwing the new works idle and depriving the people of cheap clothing in order to force more employment for wool-weavers.

It was a hopeless circle of fallacy and failure. England, producing abundant wool, had long before sought to develop by protection her own woollen manufactures.

<sup>1</sup> Work cited, ii. 487, 547.

<sup>2</sup> Defoe, writing in *Mist's Journal*, 1719 (Lee's *Defoe*, ii 138).



But what these needed for prosperity was a free choice of other wools to blend with their own;<sup>1</sup> and whereas the protected manufacturers forced all consumers to pay dear for their cloth, the wool producers naturally refused to let in foreign wool that competed with theirs in the market. Thus English woollens were always disadvantaged as against those of Flanders and France, whose weavers had a choice of wools and produced finer fabrics. Hence the resort to a brutal suppression of Irish woollen manufactures, duly followed by the smuggled export of Irish wool; and, again, to the woollen-shroud edicts, and to the attempted suppression of the cotton trade in England. All the while there was chronic distress from unemployment; idle poverty abounded; and the problem of finding work for the poor obsessed the charitable. It was beyond the average wit of the age, empirically enlightened only by self-interests, to find a solution; and statesmen could only incidentally work any real alleviation.

In 1719 we see at work the methods of agitation then normally employed to secure legislation. Women wearing calicoes were mobbed and insulted in the streets, and had their clothes torn from their backs. Having regard to other agitations of the period, we may infer that the employers had a share in organizing the rioting. Defoe, writing letters on both sides to *Mist's Journal*, a Tory periodical which he was then covertly manipulating in the service of Townshend, skilfully sets forth both sides, hinting that calicoes are not the sole cause of distress in the woollen trade, but backing the weavers' grievance at seeing women clothed for an eighth of what woollens would have cost them; while under another mask he voices the anger of the outraged women, who declare they will wear dimity if they are prevented from wearing calico. His lucid empiricism had no other solution to offer. All the while, as he notes, the prohibitions fail. India chintzes and Dutch calicoes abound in England

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, B. IV, ch. viii.



in their despite ;<sup>1</sup> and obviously, if the Act of 1721 closed the cotton-printing works in England, such goods would be smuggled from the Continent in place of those formerly printed at home.

It is Walpole's outstanding merit that he never worsened and always sought to mitigate the evils wrought by ignorant egoism. To blame him for not effecting "parliamentary reform" in an age that was in no respect ready for or desirous of it, while giving him no credit for striving to lead his age aright where it was stupidly wrong, is to darken political science. The blame lies at the door of the later statesmen who, like Burke, met a clear case for parliamentary reform with irrational prejudice. Walpole, faced by the spirit of exploitation which afterwards drove the American colonies into rebellion and independence, always steadfastly refused to attempt American taxation. Already the seeds of alienation were being sown. While Pennsylvania was loyally buying what it required in manufactures from England, there emigrated to that colony in the single year 1727 no less than 6,208 persons, of whom Irish "passengers and servants" numbered 5,655, mostly emigrating "by reason of rackrents" in their native land.<sup>2</sup> The exiled Irish, then as in the nineteenth century, were a main factor in generating anti-English feeling. That spirit Walpole always refused to foster by attempting to tax the colonies. The plan was at least twice proposed to him—once, by a retired deputy governor of Virginia, shortly after the failure of his great excise scheme. The wild outcry against that may have helped to enlighten him and prompt his refusal to rouse a similar storm in the colonies. But again, in 1739, when the foolish counsel was repeated, he refused it, and warned his advisers to let England find her profit from her colonies in her ever-growing trade with them.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lee's *Defoe*, ii. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, iii. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Lecky, i. 386, and refs. ; Morley, p. 168.



He had even accompanied his fiscal reform of 1721-22 by continuing the bounties given in the reign of Anne on imports of naval stores (tar, pitch, hemp, etc.) from the colonies and Scotland,<sup>1</sup> offering new inducements to the colonies to extend such production, on the grounds (1) that the Russia Company had by its monopoly doubled the price of tar; (2) that the Czar might stop the export in war-time; (3) that the "numerous duties" raised prices enormously; (4) that in our Baltic trade the balance was against us to the extent of £200,000; and (5) that we *might* buy cheaper from the colonies and exchange our goods on this line against theirs.<sup>2</sup> This was a dubious mixture of good and bad reasoning, seeing that the right course was obviously to end the Russia Company's monopoly and let free competition settle which was the more advantageous market. But to fight a strong monopoly was to rouse a new resistance; and Walpole's plan had the merit of fostering the colonial trade at the cost of bounties which did not outgo the burden of monopoly prices. Always—barring the case of Ireland, where he felt his hands tied—his policy thus made for union and peace throughout the realm. It was left to Tory statesmen in the next age to break it up.

At home, after his acclaimed advent in 1721 had been followed by a growth of organized opposition, his best plans of fiscal policy came to nought. No sounder scheme was ever framed than his Excise Bill of 1733, dealing with tobacco.<sup>3</sup> The great entrepôt trade in American tobacco had given rise to a vast imbroglio of fraud and smuggling, causing endless loss to the revenue<sup>4</sup> alike

<sup>1</sup> Leadam, *History of England from the Accession of Anne to the Death of George II* (vol. ix of *Political History of England*), 1909, p. 308.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe, i. 284-5.

<sup>3</sup> Wine, which was in the same case as to fraud and smuggling, was proposed to be dealt with later.

<sup>4</sup> In 1732 it was estimated at a full third of the whole duty. Walpole stated further that out of a gross produce of £750,000, the net yield of the tax was only £160,000.



by the cost of the preventive service and the wasteful machinery of collection and rebate on export. Walpole's plan, founded on successful Dutch and English precedents, was to establish bonded warehouses where tobacco could be stored without any customs duty, paying only an excise on withdrawal for home sale, while the bulk of the import, which came only for re-exportation, passed free. By this scheme, London would have become *pro tanto* a free port; and, as Walpole added, "the market of the world." An infinity of costly friction, fraud, and crime would have been averted; and the result to the revenue would be a gain of £350,000, with lowered prices and protection from adulteration to the consumer. So certain was the gain that Walpole promised to follow it up by abolishing the land tax—a notable attraction to the landed interest. Yet the scheme failed, because all the sinister interests concerned combined with the political opposition to defeat it. The organized smugglers of England held up the hands of the "patriots" in Parliament for the campaign in the name of "liberty."

Cynical observers like Chesterfield,<sup>1</sup> in Walpole's own day, said that his first tactical mistake lay in calling his measure an Excise Bill. Excises—also following Dutch example—had begun in the days of the Long Parliament, and been from time to time extended so as to cover malt, spirits, silks, pepper, tea and coffee (the two last as recently as 1723). Under William they had yielded nearly a million; under Anne, nearly two; and now they produced £3,200,000. But they had always been naturally unpopular, involving as they did some occasional inquisition into private action. Walpole's scheme meant no such inquisition, beyond a control of tobacco-shops; but the name sufficed to damn it in advance. Had he called it a Bill for the Reform of the Customs, he would at least have started with an initial advantage. But Pulteney, getting wind of the measure,

<sup>1</sup> Who thus reveals the dishonesty of his own opposition to the Excise Bill.



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 attacked it before it was introduced ;<sup>1</sup> and Walpole had against him at once an organized set of corrupt interests and an organized propaganda, led by Bolingbroke and Pulteney in the *Craftsman*. It may be asked whether Walpole would not have done well to prepare the way, as a modern statesman would do, by an educative propaganda of his own. But he had seen Defoe's propaganda in the *Mercator* on behalf of the Tory commercial treaty with France in 1713 defeated by a louder and more popular propaganda on the side of the alarmed trade interests ; and there was no Defoe now to organize a press on behalf of the Government. Walpole knew he would be opposed, but trusted to the plain advantages of his plan for success in Parliament. He was beaten by the stupidity of the nation, stirred and organized by all that was corrupt and criminal in English trade, and inflamed to an orgie of riotous uproar by the claptrap of his political opponents of all shades. It was Bolingbroke's first practical success against him—a fact which gives the real measure of Bolingbroke's ideals.<sup>2</sup>

In the House, the campaign was one of torrid and turgid declamation ; in the country, one of panic-mongering that beggared burlesque. Before the bill appeared, it was announced to be a beginning of universal arbitrary government, excises on all things, with a stand-

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, i. 268 ; *Parliamentary History*, viii. 1203. Pelham told Pulteney, in effect, to wait and see.

<sup>2</sup> The attempt of Bolingbroke's latest and most assiduous panegyrist to defend his course on the Excise Bill tells its own tale. The bill is disposed of as "a measure theoretically (!) enlightened, but practically odious by its multiplication of officers who could control elections (!), and of spying informers for the Government ; and so repugnant to the nation that it had to be withdrawn by the minister who boasted that the Houses of Parliament were his packed juries" (Sichel, *Bolingbroke*, ii. 279). This is presumably the best that modern Toryism can contrive to say against a great measure of reform which would have done more than any law planned in that age to get rid of spying informers, smuggling, and commercial fraud. Alike as an attack on Walpole and a defence of Bolingbroke, the pronouncement is beneath discussion.



ing army of State officials whose business it would be to invade every household. When Windham ranted of Empson and Dudley, the multitude played the appropriate accompaniment. A flood of pamphlets and ballads flowed from London to the provinces; and a flood of petitions came in return. Mobs flocked about the House of Commons; and members of Walpole's party were insulted as they passed through the Hall of Requests inside the building. Walpole's majority for his resolution, after a debate of thirteen hours, was only 51; and as he went out to his carriage at two in the morning, some of those outside, supposed to have been incensed by his description of their agitators as "sturdy beggars," seized him by the cloak, so that Pelham had to defend him.<sup>1</sup>

The rash phrase served the Opposition well. The people were told that their poverty was their crime in the Minister's eyes, and that his aim was to reduce them to beggary. As the debates went on in Committee, and the storm outside waxed more delirious, till officers wrote that their soldiers were on the way to mutiny because of the predicted enormous increase in the price of their tobacco, the parliamentary majority steadily fell, till one night, after the House had risen from a debate in which the number had sunk to seventeen, Walpole sat for a time on the edge of the table with his hat drawn over his brows, and at last quietly announced to the dejected friends beside him: "This dance will no further go." It had become clear that, even if the measure were carried, its enforcement would have meant wild rioting, with a disaffected soldiery to suppress it, and a probable complete breakdown in practice, by reason of universal resistance. And so a measure which a hundred years later had become everywhere in Europe as much a matter of course as a postal service was withdrawn, leaving the old abuses to flourish for generations more. The windy

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope (ii. 173) notes Coxe's correction of his first version of this story.



assailants of "corruption" in Parliament had shielded and established for an age precisely the worst kinds of corruption then in existence; and all the rogues who lived by it filled the land with their rejoicing.

Such a defeat, at the then stage of constitutional government, did not mean a change of ministry. Walpole coolly held on his way, his first step being to dismiss certain official personages who had voted or intrigued against the ministry on the measure. Chesterfield, who had induced his three brothers to oppose it, was peremptorily called upon to resign his white staff as Lord Steward of the Household. Lord Clinton and the Earl of Burlington were similarly ejected from court posts; Lord Cobham and the Duke of Bolton were deprived of their regiments; and the three Scotch peers, Montrose, Stair, and Marchmont, were as summarily dismissed from their high posts in Scotland, for the same reason. Naturally, they all joined the opposition; but Walpole was not the man to purchase peace by submitting to mutineers. On modern principles, they ought to have resigned in advance. Walpole established the rule of ministerial homogeneity by removing them.

The rest of his party showed no disposition to desert him, once the tempest of the Excise Bill was over. When the druggists and others who then dealt in tea and coffee, already under the excise system, petitioned to be relieved from it, the House threw out the motion by 233 votes to 155. Then the matter dropped.<sup>1</sup> When the opposition sought further to try conclusions by manœuvring to control the nominations for a committee of inquiry, Walpole's supporters rallied so completely that the Government's nominees were easily carried.<sup>2</sup> Years were to pass before his power was again to be shaken by the increasing combination against him. The exultant Tory section of the opposition, feeling that they had broken his strength, made a push to repeal the Septennial Act; but Pulteney and other Whigs, who

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, i, 409.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* i. 405, and refs.



had helped to pass the measure, held back, and the divided opposition failed. Walpole's majority had quailed before the bellow of the multitude against the Excise Bill; but it re-formed its line against a mere parliamentary attack, about which the multitude did not care, any more than the smugglers and swindlers who had lately inflamed them. In the general elections of 1734, Walpole's system of party management again triumphed substantially, though not so largely as at the last election; Pulteney avowed his discouragement;<sup>1</sup> and the once-more-baffled Bolingbroke, disgusted with the defection of his ex-Whig allies on the Septennial Act, withdrew again to France. Walpole's fall was still deferred.

Of his financial and fiscal policy there is little more to say. His raid on the Sinking Fund, tranquilly supported by the landed interest in the House of Commons in the beginning of the very session in which the Excise Bill had to be withdrawn, no longer evokes, in an age which has seen many such raids, the censure which Coxe and even Stanhope passed upon it. Already in Adam Smith's day it had come to be a matter of course that ministers at a pinch should act as Walpole had done.<sup>2</sup> Sinking Funds set up for a mere general reduction of debt, and not actually required to meet the annual charges, have latterly been described as made to be raided. Walpole, it is true, had been one of the Government which set it up (1717);<sup>3</sup> and its yield, which was simply the excess of revenue over expenditure, was the measure of his good management and of the prosperity of the trade which his fiscal policy had relieved. But Walpole had come to feel that just as the unequally and unjustly levied land tax<sup>4</sup> was usefully to be kept

<sup>1</sup> Sichel, i. 313.

<sup>2</sup> *Wealth of Nations*, B. V, ch. iii. Cp. Ewald, p. 213, on the failure of Pitt's Sinking Fund.

<sup>3</sup> A point which Pulteney wittily pressed home. (Ewald, p. 222.)

<sup>4</sup> As to which, see A. L. Smith, *Social England*, as cited, v. 160.



low and if possible abolished, in the interest of the stability of the crown,<sup>1</sup> so the National Debt was, from the same point of view, a part of the existing state of things that there need be no anxiety to remove with great rapidity. And a nation which would not let itself be relieved of a corrupt and burdensome fiscal system had in the circumstances no grievance against him. The raid on the Sinking Fund, as an alternative to an increase of the land tax from one to two shillings in the pound, was carried by a majority of 110.

The fact that a Jacobite Rebellion actually came in 1745<sup>2</sup> is a sufficient hint of the soundness of Walpole's policy of *quieta non movere*. It is, as Lord Morley avows, "a maxim without lustre," but it was the right rule for that age. A scientific land tax, such as the politicians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have demanded, was quite beyond the compass of the generation which overthrew the Excise Bill. Walpole's abstention in 1737 from a possible reduction of the National Debt by a conversion of certain annuities at a lower rate of interest, as he had himself planned doing, was a less simply defensible course; and one which to-day no scrupulous minister would repeat. The measure was practicable; and the opposition which it would elicit, though considerable, could not well have approached in violence to that evoked by the Excise Bill. But when we note that of the 23,000 annuity-holders who would be affected 17,000 held only sums of £1,000 or less, and that 6,000 were trustees for widows and orphans, we can understand why Walpole declined to move. He partly foresaw the war with Spain into which he was later forced,<sup>3</sup> and desired to have willing lenders

<sup>1</sup> "The reduction of the land tax was the bitterest blow ever dealt by Walpole against the designs of the Opposition." (Ewald, pp. 225-6.)

<sup>2</sup> Though Mr. Sichel speaks of Walpole as exploiting the "spectre" of Jacobitism.

<sup>3</sup> Morley, p. 181.



in case he had to borrow. He had previously reduced State interest from five per cent. to four; but had he now reduced it to three, only to borrow later at a higher rate, he would have caused distress and incurred unpopularity to no purpose. In England, as before in Holland, the opportunities for safe investment by people not in business were so small that the paying off of debt was dreaded by fund-holders, and strongly deprecated by financiers. Walpole chose to keep them on his side.

No pretender to lofty notions of national regeneration, he will strike modern reformers at some other points as sadly impotent for good. Of all the social evils of his time, drunkenness was the most devastating, the most appalling to a sensitive onlooker. Under his prosperous rule, gin-drinking had become a great moral and physical plague, laming industry, spreading poverty, multiplying crime, sowing disease and death. For such an evil, Walpole did not pretend to have any surgery. But his *non possumus* was saner than the zeal of the reformers of his day. In 1736, on the basis of a memorable Petition to the House of Commons by the Justices of the Peace for Middlesex, Sir Joseph Jekyll introduced a bill to tax gin and other ardent liquors so heavily as in effect to prohibit their general use. The duty was to be 20s. a gallon; £50 was to be charged for a license to retail; and the sale of smaller quantities than a gallon was to be prohibited. Walpole and Pulteney both opposed the bill, but it was carried; and Walpole had in turn to carry a measure granting £70,000 per annum to the crown, in compensation for the expected loss of revenue to the Civil List under the humiliating arrangement by which the existing duties on drink were assigned to the king's support.<sup>1</sup>

The outcome of the measure was the first great object-lesson as to the difficulty of making the nation sober by Act of Parliament. As the date fixed for the operation of the Act drew near, the gin-drinking populace

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, ii. 197.



began, dolefully and without any hearty defiance, a weak imitation of the uproar against the Excise Bill. Some Jacobites planned to use the opportunity by distributing drink gratis and creating a rising ; but Walpole's vigilance prevented the proposed disturbance ;<sup>1</sup> and the miscellaneous mob did nothing more than stultify the new law. Mournful ballads on the doom of " Mother Gin " were sung in the streets ; the gin-shop signs were draped in black ; and the funeral of " Madam Geneva " was represented by tipsy crowds on the eve of the beginning of the new regimen. But the gin-devil was not to be thus driven out. The multitude of " spying informers " professedly dreaded by the opponents of the Excise Bill were now duly called into existence, and went to work ; in some parts violent riots took place ; and the consumption was for a time restricted, the figures for 1737 being only 3,700,000 gallons ; but, as Walpole had foreseen, illicit sale took the place of licit. Hawkers sold gin in the streets under other names ; drink-shops and chemists' shops sold it, coloured, as a medicine under an endless variety of slang names. Soon the sale of smuggled liquor exceeded the old figures ; in 1742, after Walpole's fall, the estimated distillation was 7,000,000 gallons ;<sup>2</sup> in 1751, over 11,000,000 gallons.

Further parliamentary efforts were no more successful. In 1743 a bill, opposed like that of 1736 by leading statesmen, was carried, to reduce the duty on spirits to 1d. a gallon, levied at the still, and to reduce licenses from £50 to £20. The idea was to make smuggling unprofitable. But in 1749 over 4,000 persons were convicted for selling spirits without license. In 1750 the London physicians computed that 14,000 cases of grave disease, most of them incurable, were due to drink ;<sup>3</sup> and in 1751, the year of the production of Hogarth's terrible

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, ii. 198.

<sup>2</sup> Birchall, *England . . . 1688 to 1720*, 1876, p. 231 ; Lecky, ii. 102-3.

<sup>3</sup> Lecky, last cit.



picture, "Gin Alley," Fielding wrote his pamphlet *On the Late Increase of Robbers*, drawing a picture of crime and misery which was the commentary of the picture, and predicting that another generation of such drunkenness would go far to eliminate the poor of the cities. What actually happened, we can see, was an immense destruction of life of the type prone to alcohol, without any attainment of the elimination speculatively supposed by some modern scientists to have taken place in analogous circumstances in antiquity.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the England that Walpole is still blamed for not having extensively "reformed." His successors, so far, had no more found the secret than he.

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Archdall Reid's able works on *The Principles of Heredity*, 2nd ed. 1906 (ch. xv), and *The Laws of Heredity*, 1910 (chs. xv and xvi), which vary considerably from his earlier work, *The Present Evolution of Man*, 1896.



## CHAPTER XIII

### WALPOLE'S FOREIGN POLICY

It is for his foreign policy that Walpole is most generally acclaimed, and, in our time, least generally criticized, though in his own day he was violently attacked by Bolingbroke, Pulteney, Pitt, and others of the "Patriot" party, as he is occasionally still. Above all, it was a policy of peace, and, in particular, of peace with France, after a generation in which France had been fought during most of twenty-five years on the double grounds of religious and dynastic motive.

The wars of that age reveal all Europe as chronically convulsed by dynastic forces no less than England, questions of succession to thrones being even more frequent occasions of strife than even the self-aggrandizement of their occupants at any given moment. Everywhere peoples were the appanages of kings; and, kings being the determinants of policy, "balance of power" had then a very real meaning, apt to be missed by those who came across the phrase in a period in which the declining force of kingship began to alter the problem. It was not that kings were much more given to war than republics had been in the ages of republics; Holland had perhaps been as ready to pick quarrels in her republican period as in any other; and there is a circumstantial record of how an insolent Dutch ambassador had been the cause of the persistent rancour of Louis XIV against the Dutch republic.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, he is said by another authority to have borne a similar rancour against William of Orange for an offensively worded

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires du Comte de Brienne*, 1828, ii. 326 sq.



refusal to accept the hand of one of the king's illegitimate daughters.<sup>1</sup> Thus in a period in which wars between States turned on larger issues, the personal susceptibilities of kings might be reckoned a special factor affecting national relations. In any case, combinations of kings were much more facile than the *ententes* of nations ; and though family alliances have not as a rule worked out as they might have been expected to do, the chances of two or more powerful States coming under the control of one family meant risks such as do not arise where peoples rule themselves. A universal acquiescence in kingship, which only in our own time begins to vanish from European politics, meant that a nation fought as its king felt ; and even in England, then the one State with an effective constitutional system, the king's bias counted for much.

It was the Dutch interest of William that determined the entrance of England into his Grand Alliance against Louis XIV ; and again it was his personal decision that committed her to the two abortive Partition Treaties of 1698 and 1700, on the collapse of which he personally engineered the second Grand Alliance against Louis in 1701. So far as William was concerned, the two Partition Treaties were honest attempts to preserve European peace. The aged Charles II of Spain being childless, Louis XIV and the Emperor, Leopold of Austria, each coveted and claimed the succession for his House. Louis's first wife had been Charles's eldest sister ; and Leopold's first wife was Charles's sister also ; but both, like Louis's mother, Anne, had on marriage renounced their claims to the Spanish succession ; while Leopold's mother, Maria, aunt of Charles, was the one of all the aunts and sisters who had not done so. The dangers of the

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Saint-Simon*, ed. Hachette, i. 297-8. According to Brienne, the Prince of Orange took endless pains to win the goodwill of Louis (*Mémoires*, ii. 315). Either, then, he was conscious of having given cause of offence and wished to make amends, or Saint-Simon's story is of doubtful accuracy.



monarchic system had never been more strikingly illustrated ; either an Austrian or a French succession to the Spanish throne being reckoned fatal to the balance of power. By the Partition Treaty of 1698, the Spanish crown was to go to Leopold's grandson, the Electoral Prince of Bavaria ; while small portions of the Spanish dominions were to go to the French Dauphin and the Austrian Archduke Charles. The death of the Electoral Prince of Bavaria in 1699 wrecked the entire scheme, leaving a far more difficult situation.

An attempt was made to meet it by the second Partition Treaty, in which Louis agreed with William to let the Archduke Charles become king of Spain and of the Spanish Netherlands and the colonies, while the Spanish possessions in Italy and the Spanish port of Guipuscoa were to be ceded to France for the Dauphin ; Louis further undertaking to give up the duchy of Milan to the heir-apparent of the duchy of Lorraine on the death of its reigning duke, when Lorraine, in compensation, was to become French. To this plan the Emperor would not accede, the driving of a French wedge between Austria and Spain being in his eyes intolerable. On Louis's part, the treaty seems to have been a deliberate deception, he having notified its terms to the king of Spain, with the result that that monarch, now near his end, made his will in favour of Philip, the son of the Dauphin and grandson of Louis. Louis had made his plans in view of the weakening of William's power by the insistence of Parliament in 1698-9 on reducing his army to 7,000 men. Of a foe so weakened, Louis had no fear.

It was now, however, his turn to miscalculate. His blunder in recognizing and proclaiming the Pretender as king of England on the death of James II sufficed alone to make the nation substantially unanimous for another continental war, even in the interests of Protestantism ; and though the ultimate costliness of that war, and the identification of its triumphs with the per-



sonal ascendancy of Marlborough, caused reaction enough to permit of the Peace of Utrecht, France by that time was well ruined.

What determined the continuance of friendly relations between France and England after the accession of George I and the death of Louis XIV was the new turn of the dynastic kaleidoscope in France. In point of personal bias, George I, who as Elector of Hanover had been in the Grand Alliance, was as anti-French as any one. But the passing of Louis left a changed world. He had seen his son die in 1711, and that son's son in 1712, leaving as heir of France the great-grandson, the sickly child who was to be Louis XV. Philip V of Spain, this child's uncle, over whose accession to the Spanish throne the great war had been waged, desired<sup>1</sup> and was expected to claim the French regency, and the succession on the child's expected death; the only rival being the child's great-uncle, the Regent Philip, Duke of Orleans, Louis's other grandson. Philip V had solemnly renounced the French succession,<sup>2</sup> but in the case of the Spanish succession such renunciations had counted for little in the face of a great opportunity.<sup>3</sup> The Duke of Orleans, on the other hand, was keen for his own claim, and being likewise conscious of the exhaustion of France in the great war, was ready to make an ally of England, whose interest, as before, lay in keeping the French and Spanish crowns apart. Thus friendship with France became good ✓ Whig policy within two years of the Treaty of Utrecht; and it was the first momentous decision of Walpole, as head of the anti-French party in England, to let the Tory Peace of Utrecht become the basis of a good under- standing with France, the "national enemy." N.B.

In this policy he successfully persisted under George II, whose martial proclivities and anti-French bias gave

<sup>1</sup> Lemontey, *Histoire de la Régence*, 1832, i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> By oath, with his hand on the Gospels. (Wyon, *History of Queen Anne*, ii. 415.)

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Stanhope, i. 227.



him much trouble. And the policy was, first and last, conceived in the interest of the Georges themselves, who had so much more to gain than to lose from an international policy that spared England the strain of foreign war and the extra risks it involved of revived dynastic movements at home. But Walpole's peace policy was not a mere product of such statesmanlike calculation: it was grounded in his healthy common sense, his perfect freedom from the vinous idealism of the war-mongers of all schools; his economic aversion to waste of effort, power, material, men, money. Already the Whig leaders under George I, concerned about the debt left by the wars of the two preceding reigns, were zealously bent on preserving the peace of Europe by strong combinations; and Walpole was whole-heartedly of that mind. Thus, though he was following their lead, he seems, as a peace-lover entirely free from sentimentalism, to bring a new sanity into British politics after a century of European embroilments. And when we weigh the pretexts upon which some of his later opponents were ready to go to war at the price of others' blood and others' misery, the question arises whether the statesman who has been most commonly accused of disregard of principle was not really a more conscientious man of affairs than most of his corrivals.

His colleagues had taken the first step in forming the Triple Alliance of 1717, in which France, England, and Holland united to maintain the settlement made by the Peace of Utrecht. The entrance of the Emperor into the Alliance in 1718 made it quadruple, giving fresh security for peace at the price of the cession to him of Sicily, while the Duke of Savoy got Sardinia, with the title of king. It remained to reckon with Spain, which had suffered most, in prestige and in loss of territory, from the Utrecht settlement, and which made a convulsive effort to upset this "policy of isolation." The Emperor, Charles VI, was he who as Archduke Charles had been the claimant to the Spanish throne supported



by the Grand Alliance; and Philip, the French claimant, had remained king of Spain. When, immediately after the death of his first wife, he married<sup>1</sup> (1714) the Princess of Parma, Elisabeth Farnese, that energetic and ambitious woman brought a new impulse into Spanish affairs. For her infant son she was determined to secure the inheritance of Parma, the duke, her uncle and stepfather, being childless. Thus yet another dynastic ambition menaced European peace.<sup>2</sup> And the menace was heightened by the fact that Spain at that time was managed by a highly capable statesman, as zealous as Walpole for domestic good government, but no less zealous, apparently, for the recovery of Spanish dominion by aggressive war. This was the Italian Giulio Alberoni, who rose from the position of a verger to be Cardinal and first minister of Spain.

An accomplished historian has affirmed, concerning the Spain of that period, that "It is not every country that needs a Walpole. Spain was, and perhaps is, emphatically a military nation, which decays in peace."<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps a sufficient commentary on this theorem to note that it was by a few years of reformatory government that Alberoni was able to make Spain capable of a war from which she derived small advantage. When he took complete hold of Spanish affairs in 1715, Spain had had a much greater period of war, from which she had extracted no prosperity; and her affairs were certainly in a way to promote "decay in peace." To a wasteful and corrupt administration was added a fiscal

<sup>1</sup> As to this marriage, see a vivid page in Mr. E. Armstrong's *Elisabeth Farnese*, 1892, p. 9. As to Philip's first wife, see a note in Lemontey, *Histoire de la Régence*, i. 121.

<sup>2</sup> "To win a heritage by war for the son of Elisabeth, to preserve a heritage by treaty for the daughter of Charles VI, or to combine the interests of the two children by marriage—such were the main problems of European politics." (Armstrong, introd. p. viii. But see ch. iii, where Elisabeth is described as indolent and careless in her first years of queenship.)

<sup>3</sup> Armstrong, as cited, p. 397.



system under which, as in France, the nobles and the clergy paid no taxes,<sup>1</sup> though Orry had compelled them to make a forced loan in 1707; and every province in Spain had its import duties against the others. Spain distinctly needed a Walpole; and for a few years Alberoni played the part: using the great power of the Spanish crown upon a promise to the king that in five years *of peace* he would make him the strongest monarch in Europe,<sup>2</sup> the Cardinal as first minister expressly taxed the nobility and the clergy under a papal bull,<sup>3</sup> reorganized the administration, punished and exiled the priests who resisted taxation, threw the trade with the Indies open to competition, checked waste, and made an end of the system of internal customs.<sup>4</sup> Seeing that after a few years of this regimen Spain was almost unprecedentedly prosperous,<sup>5</sup> it would seem that still more might have been achieved in that direction.

In the *Testament politique*, which in large part appears to give his personal views, it is pointed out that the Alcabalas—duties of one-tenth levied on every sale of every article sold throughout the kingdom—were of all imposts the most difficult to collect; and he proposes a change in the method.<sup>6</sup> Later, the economist Ustaritz pronounced that these duties had been the cause of the ruin of Spanish manufactures;<sup>7</sup> and Alberoni, had he been allowed time to experiment, would have been likely

<sup>1</sup> This seems to have been conceded by Philip III, as to the nobles, with the idea of helping agriculture. See the so-called *Testament Politique du Cardinal Alberoni*, 1753, p. 20. The immunity of the clergy was of old standing in Spain as elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, i. 295, citing Alberoni's *Apology*, as given in the *Historical Register*, 1722, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> Lemontey, *Histoire de la Régence*, i. 136.

<sup>4</sup> C. Pariset, *Il Cardinale Giulio Alberoni*, 1905, pp. 45–53.

<sup>5</sup> Cp. ch. iii of the *Testament politique* as to the wasteful incompetence of the old administration.

<sup>6</sup> *Testament*, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, B. V, ch. ii; ed. McCulloch, p. 407; Estrada, *Curso de Econ. Polit.*, 1850, ii. 432–8.



to discover as much. He laid his finger on the essential unproductiveness of Spanish royal expenditure, typified in the costly bullfights, and urged a direction of State outlays which should promote a taste for the arts.<sup>1</sup> The Italian peasant, reared in poverty, had an economic sense that was denied to kings. On the other hand, he was fitted by nature for all the trickeries of his sphere; and there accordingly remains in every critical conception of him a sense of something below greatness.<sup>2</sup> He obtained his cardinalate, and the bull enabling him to tax the clergy, by persuading the Pope, Clement XI, that the naval armament he was preparing at Barcelona was destined to fight the Turks, then at war with the Empire and with Venice; and the first use made of that armament was to attack the Emperor's possessions in the Mediterranean. It was clever;<sup>3</sup> but it was not masterly; and it was finally futile.

Whether Alberoni's own aim or ideal in his reforms was the building up of military strength enough to recover for Spain her lost Italian dominions, is a moot point. Such clear economic intelligence as his reforms display does not seem akin to a creed of conquest. He, surely, must have seen what even some Spaniards could see, that the surrender of the Netherlands and Italy was to Spain a relief from a costly burden, not a loss of revenue.<sup>4</sup> Saint-Simon expressly ascribes to him a sole passion for driving the English and French out of the West-Indian trade by means of the Dutch,<sup>5</sup> which, though not the

<sup>1</sup> *Testament*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Lemontey, i. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Lemontey ranks Clement, Alberoni and the Duke of Savoy as "the three most celebrated tricksters of their age" (i. 136).

<sup>4</sup> Cp. Armstrong, as cited, p. 62; Stanhope, i. 295, citing Bubb. And see Alberoni's express avowal on this head in Stanhope, p. 323.

<sup>5</sup> *Mémoires*, ed. Hachette, 1878, viii. 313. "Etant sourd à toute autre proposition" are the words. Yet in the chapter (vi) of the *Testament* which states Alberoni's plan as to the Indies, it is asserted that the policy of the Spanish crown in regard to Italy was *précisément du Cardinal Alberoni* (p. 104).



wisest, was in comparison an uncostly policy, needing only the naval power which he was building up, and promising indefinite profit in money revenue. In point of fact he was already making the Indies yield a bullion revenue such as they had not given for a long time;<sup>1</sup> and with his thrifty methods that would have been much increased.

Up to this point, his career is that of a man with a signally keen eye for realities, not that of a megalomaniac. William Stanhope, writing to Craggs from Fresneda in August, 1718, describes the Cardinal as avowing that "war will ruin all the arrangements which he has made in Spain, and which really do him great honour," besides giving the opinion that "it concerns the king of Spain much more to have affairs well ordered in Spain and the Indies than to carry his views outside."<sup>2</sup> That was Alberoni's natural view. The son of a poor Italian gardener, beginning as a verger in the cathedral of Piacenza, he was enabled by a patron to become a priest, whereafter his first step to political advancement was made through a peculiar opportunity to be useful, on behalf of the Duke of Parma, to the Duc de Vendôme, then (1706) in Italy as French commander.<sup>3</sup> Through Vendôme he ultimately became agent for the Duke of Parma at the Spanish Court, where, through the favour first of the Princesse des Ursins and later of the queen, his advancement to the chief ministership was rapid. But, precisely because his power depended wholly on that of the crown, he had to serve the royal will; and when in 1717 the Emperor's officials seized the aged Spanish Grand Inquisitor,<sup>4</sup> Molinès, on his way

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, i. 325.

<sup>2</sup> Letter (in French) in App. to vol. ii. of Stanhope's *History*, p. 365.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. préf. de l'éditeur in *Testament*, as cited, p. xx sq.; Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, ed. Hachette, 1878, iii. 251-2—an astonishing account of both men. The *Histoire du Cardinal Alberoni*, 1719, gives a quite decorous picture.

<sup>4</sup> Whom Alberoni called *la solennissima bestia*. (Lemontey, i. 135.)



through Italy, hoping so to secure papers revealing the plans of the Spanish court, the indignant king and queen, by one account, insisted on a war of reprisals, and Alberoni had perforce to obey.<sup>1</sup>

Previously, he had shown himself no less desirous than the French Regent of friendship with England; he made a new and satisfactory treaty of commerce with her in 1715; and he had openly repudiated the Pretender on Philip's behalf.<sup>2</sup> But when the Triple Alliance definitely declared its purpose of maintaining the settlement of Utrecht, their Spanish majesties took offence; and Alberoni had to coincide or resign. He had created intense enmities by his fiscal and administrative reforms; and, as was soon to appear, only the favour of the crown stood between him and overthrow. As an English attaché put it, in 1716, "the absolute control over Spain will belong to the highest bidder for the queen's son. This is the grand and the only maxim which has never changed since I have been here."<sup>3</sup> This too was the stage at which negotiations were on foot, to give the Emperor Sicily for Sardinia, and so bring him into the Alliance; and an aggression might seem the way to prevent that development.<sup>4</sup> All accounts of Alberoni exhibit him as making his way in life by a special gift of compliance with the humours of those in authority over him; and no one could long please Elisabeth Farnese, "the Termagant of Spain," without serving her purposes. But the common view at the time seems to have been that Alberoni planned the course for Spain and persuaded the king to assent.<sup>5</sup>

Suffice it to say that if the policy was of his choosing

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, i. 298-9 and *note*.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 296.

<sup>3</sup> Bubb to Secretary Stanhope, *id.* pp. 297, 299.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* p. 301.

<sup>5</sup> *Histoire du Cardinal Alberoni*, 1719 (by Jean Rousset de Missy) p. 114. Mr Armstrong, after a very full investigation, leaves the matter in doubt. (*Elisabeth Farnese*, pp 124-5.)



as to time and aim, it proved him unequal to his schemes, and, with all his energy, radically deficient in the executive judgment which made Richelieu one of the foremost figures of his age.<sup>1</sup> The fleet which he had been preparing was strong enough for the seizure of Sardinia; but the intervention of France and England showed its inadequacy for a large war. The end of the matter was that after vain caballing by him in France and England, the Spanish fleet was destroyed by the English at Passaro; that his project of invading England in 1719 came to nothing; that his general failure moved the King and Queen to accede to the demands of France and England for his dismissal; and that he was driven from Spain in disgrace, never more to play a prominent political part, though he lived till 1752. He had better, on the whole, have played the part of Walpole. The queen, whose marriage with Philip had been brought about by Alberoni, and could only have been brought about by him, showed him no gratitude whatever; though she is held to have learned from him the tactics which she thenceforth pursued in European politics.

Our historian of the period quaintly tells how, after Elisabeth and Philip had been induced to accede to the Quadruple Alliance, avowedly renouncing rights and possessions for the sake of peace, and war was stopped in Sicily on the verge of a battle, there ensued "a solid and happy peace for Europe, which endured for *upwards of twelve years*."<sup>2</sup> The solidity of the peace may be estimated from the narrow margin by which another European war was avoided in 1725—an episode which freshly illustrates the extreme facility alike of alliances and breaches between monarchs. After the peace of 1719, the French Regent, Orléans, gave his daughter in marriage to Don Luis, son of the king of Spain, and

<sup>1</sup> His rages are not suggestive of balance at this period (Stanhope, i. 322). But sham fury was said to be one of his devices to deceive (Lemontey, i. 136).

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, i. 367.



arranged a marriage contract between the young French king and the little Spanish princess Mary Anne, aged four years. The child was accordingly sent to France to be brought up. After the death of Orléans, however, his successor, the Duke of Bourbon, was much concerned to have Louis married as quickly as possible, lest, in the event of his dying without issue, the young Duke of Orléans, whom Bourbon hated, should come to the throne. A wife was accordingly found for Louis in Maria Leczynski, daughter of Stanislaus, the dethroned King of Poland; the little Spanish Infanta was sent home (1725); and Louis, aged fifteen, married a bride of twenty-five, whom he soon made duly unhappy.

As was foreseen, the insult to the Spanish crown was furiously resented alike by king, queen, and people, the latter threatening to massacre the French residents in Madrid. Philip and Elisabeth at once made warm offers of friendship to England, whose Government, however, stood to its French alliance—a friendship then so warm that Bourbon had first asked for Princess Mary of England as a bride for Louis. George I, little given to idealism in other directions, declined to have his daughter change her religion for a husband; but the alliance held. Madrid then made eager overtures (previously contemplated) to Vienna; and an amazed Europe saw a treaty of alliance struck up between the two former rival claimants to the throne of Spain. The Emperor had had grievances against his former allies, and had angered England and Holland by giving a charter establishing an East India Company at Ostend. That Company the King of Spain agreed to recognize; and other accommodations made possible a secret treaty (revealed to George I at Hanover) by which Spain and Austria planned the recovery of Gibraltar and Minorca for Spain, and the enthronement of the Pretender in England.

This was the motive for the counter-alliance between England, France, Hanover, Sweden, and Prussia, known in history as the Treaty of Hanover (1725). It was duly



thundered against in the British Parliament by the Patriots of the Opposition, who a dozen years later were to denounce Walpole for unreadiness to go to war with Spain. They affirmed that England was being sacrificed to Hanover; while the king's ministers there demonstrated that the safety of Hanover was put in mortal jeopardy by the antagonizing of the Emperor in the interests of English trade. The latter thesis was plainly much the nearer to the truth. Whatever Walpole may have thought of the treaty as a whole, its management by Townshend was the occasion of the first breach between them. Walpole objected strongly to the heavy subsidy promised to Sweden, and found that Townshend was broaching a wild scheme to conquer the Austrian Netherlands, which proved him a dangerous foreign minister.

All that happened in the way of war was that Walpole sent Admiral Hosier's fleet to Porto Bello, in the West Indies, with orders not to fight unless the Spaniards came out; while Spain, on her part, vainly besieged Gibraltar. Catherine, the widow of Peter the Great, had carried on the great Czar's rancour against England, and was eager to go to war on the Emperor's side to recover Schleswig from Denmark for her son-in-law, the Duke of Holstein. Admiral Weyer was accordingly sent with a fleet to the Baltic. But Russia did not fight; the Czarina soon died (1726); and on the visible failure of the Spaniards at Gibraltar the preliminaries of a peace were arranged at Paris (1727), shortly whereafter George I died on his way once more to his beloved Hanover. Walpole and his earlier colleagues had kept that reign free from serious war. Peace, indeed, was not yet secured; and in the session of 1728 Walpole had to provide a subsidy of £230,000 to maintain 12,000 Hessians in British pay; and a further subsidy of £25,000 a year for four years to the Duke of Brunswick, who engaged to furnish, if required, 5,000 men.

These arrangements had their effect on the counsels of Spain and the Emperor. Philip, on learning of the



death of George, withheld his ratification of further peace preliminaries which had been signed in his name but without his authority at Vienna. He had counted on fresh dynastic troubles in England. These not arising, he now (1728) accepted the preliminaries, and left further difficulties to be settled at a Peace Congress at Soissons—this after the protracted Conference at Cambrai, arranged for in 1719, had come to nothing. The Soissons Congress promised to run a similar course of delays and evasions; and in 1729 the King's Speech hinted that a war might be preferable to a doubtful and imperfect peace. There were two outstanding sources of trouble: (1) Gibraltar, captured in 1704, and (2) the question of the cutting of logwood in the Bay of Campeachy, which had come forward in 1717 and was to emerge again ten years later. Gibraltar was plainly a delicate and difficult problem, and it is interesting to note that at that period there were notions on the English side of a real settlement.

Bolingbroke, to begin with, had complained of the cost of maintaining Gibraltar in 1712; and his party had been loud in disparagement of the "barren rock," the holding of which was a "useless charge," causing an increase in England's standing army.<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, on coming to power, leant to the same view, and had the approval of the king and his colleagues when he went to Madrid in 1718 with a proposal to surrender Gibraltar upon certain conditions. For it was clear that there could hardly be real goodwill in Spain towards England while she held it. His conditions, however, whatever they were (probably a large measure of free trade in South America) were refused.<sup>2</sup> France in this matter leant to the side of Spain. But when the question was raised in 1720 by a motion in Parliament for a Bill giving the king power to cede Gibraltar at his discretion, there was an explosion of popular displeasure. "You cannot imagine," wrote Stanhope, "the ferment which the

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, i. 434.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 435.



proposal produced. The public was roused with indignation"; whereupon the Opposition promptly decided that Gibraltar, formerly decried by most of them as a barren rock and a useless charge, was a priceless national asset.

The Government accordingly had to drop the matter for the time, Stanhope persuading the French Regent of the necessity. Later in the same year, however, he again sought a settlement, obtaining the consent of the Lords Justices<sup>1</sup> to the proposition that Gibraltar should be given up for an adequate equivalent; and he proposed to Philip that this should be Florida. Again he met with a refusal: Spain would yield nothing, even for Gibraltar. Yet the Spaniards felt so strongly on the subject that, after the death of Stanhope, in 1721, Townshend got the king to meet Philip by a letter promising to make the restitution at some future time for an equivalent, if the consent of Parliament could be obtained; and even to modify the qualifications of the letter when Philip and Elisabeth demurred to its wording.<sup>2</sup> This letter they regarded as a promise; and persistently they called for its fulfilment. When in 1725 the English envoy, William Stanhope, explained that the cession could not be achieved without the assent of Parliament, Elisabeth informed him that King George had only to summon a Parliament and explain that they must either give up Gibraltar or lose their trade with the Indies and Spain, and all would agree to the cession. Her Majesty thereby indicated her defects as a practical politician, and made it fairly clear that, whatever "equivalent" Philip might have agreed to,<sup>3</sup> it would not have been such as to satisfy the English people; seeing that at that moment their trade with the Indies was on a most unsatisfactory footing.

<sup>1</sup> As to the question of the power of the crown to cede territory without assent of Parliament, see Todd, *Parliamentary Government*, ed. Walpole, 1892, i. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, i. 437; *Commons Journals*, xxi. 285.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Stanhope, ii. 138.



The outcome was that, ~~as a strong minority~~ in both Houses of Parliament maintained a vehement opposition to any surrender of either Gibraltar or Minorca, Philip at length signed (1729) the Treaty of Seville, in which Spain entered into a defensive alliance with France and England (Holland acceding later), confirmed former treaties, restored the English trade in America to its former footing, returned all captures, with compensation—and let the question of Gibraltar lapse without a word. Philip was in one of his accesses of apathy; the treaty was negotiated by William Stanhope, the only ambassador, he said, who had never deceived him; and, above all, it had been conceded to the queen, in order to secure the succession of her son Don Carlos to the duchies of Parma and Tuscany, that Spanish garrisons should be placed in four towns there. Philip, giving up hope of recovering Gibraltar, drew the lines of San Roque across the isthmus, to cut off its communication with the main land. On this point, he refused to yield to any pressure; but Gibraltar remained a British fortress.

The Emperor at Vienna was as much chagrined as was Madrid; and he did not conceal his feelings, thereby incurring a further chagrin. While in alliance with Spain, he had received large subsidies in the bullion of which Spain still had an annual supply from America; and Charles, deprived of that accommodation, sought to raise a loan of £400,000 in London. Thereupon the ministry carried a bill prohibiting loans to foreign Powers without licence from the king under the privy seal. An outcry against such "tyranny" was promptly raised by the Opposition, who, the historian observes, would have been equally loud against the Government had it permitted the loan.<sup>1</sup> But it was hardly in Walpole's usual way thus to make a more embittered enemy of the Emperor; and he soon took pains to secure his good will. The great desire of Charles was to secure the succession of his daughter, Maria Theresa, to the

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, ii. 142.



dominions of his House in the absence of a male heir; and Walpole accordingly proposed to him, without consulting Fleury, to guarantee that succession if the Emperor would assent to the Spanish garrisons being placed in Parma and abolish the Ostend Company. The Emperor judiciously consented; and on this basis was drawn the Second Treaty of Vienna (1731).

The next grave risk was set up by the War of the Polish Succession in 1733. In that year died Augustus II, king of Poland and Elector of Saxony, of which two States Poland alone really did "elect" its monarchs. There ensued what our historian complacently calls "the usual evils of an elective monarchy"—this after recording the evils attending the succession to the throne in England and in Spain during the previous half-century. Stanislaus Leczynski, who in 1709 had been ejected from the Polish throne by Russia in favour of Augustus, and who was now father-in-law of the king of France, renewed his claim in person and was elected by acclamation; while the son of Augustus was backed by his Saxon troops, and also by Russia, against the preference of the bulk of the Polish people. Stanislaus was thus again ejected by Russian force.

Despite the warnings of Walpole, who persuaded him only to avoid direct military action, the Emperor busied himself indirectly on behalf of Augustus III, thus offending Louis, to whom Spain thereupon offered its assistance by way of securing another heritage for Elisabeth's son, Don Carlos. He had recently attained to the duchy of Parma; and his mother now desired that for his brother, and for him the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, held by the Emperor. The French minister Fleury, reluctantly accepted the situation; and French and Spanish troops overran the whole of Austrian Lombardy. Russia, having secured her own ends in Poland, left the Emperor to his own devices, which served him ill. In 1734 the Spaniards defeated his army near Parma, and proceeded to conquer Naples. Capua and Gaeta,



and then Sicily, speedily surrendered, and Don Carlos was crowned King of Sicily as Charles III, under which title he was to succeed to the throne of Spain in 1759.

The Emperor was less unsuccessful on the Rhine, where his troops, under the now aged Prince Eugene, were faced by the French under Marshal Berwick, now aged sixty-four. Berwick was killed; but Philipsburg was taken by his successor, the Marquis d'Asfeld; and Eugene, ill supplied with men and provisions, could only avert invasion. Thus hard pressed, the Emperor turned to England, with all the natural appeals to the old ally to prevent the dangerous aggrandizement of France and Spain; and George II and his queen were alike disposed to help him. It is possible to read several accounts of the war without learning anything of the decisive part played by Walpole from this point onwards in preventing its extension and in bringing it to an end.<sup>1</sup> He seems either to have known or inferred the existence of the secret treaty between France and Spain which came fully to light only in the last century,<sup>2</sup> under which the former bound herself to support Spain against England on questions of trade in the West Indies. And he was determined to give no opportunity for the development of that combination.

He was at this time (1734) at the height of his power, nearing a general election under the Septennial Act, and therefore faced with a special stress of opposition activity, directed against his home and foreign policy alike, against the Septennial Act, and against everything else for which he could be held responsible. And it was at this point that he found not only the king and queen, but the majority of his Cabinet in favour of a war policy upon which he was determined not to embark. Lord Harrington, his most capable Secretary of State—the William Stanhope of former negotiations with Spain—

<sup>1</sup> Lord Morley's detailed account (ch. x) does Walpole full justice.

<sup>2</sup> Ranke, *History of England*, Eng. tr. 1875, v. 397.



was inclined by old friendships to oblige the Spanish court; and Newcastle, unimpressive but ubiquitous, took the court view at home. And while the Opposition declared for war because he was against it, the general feeling on his own side ran the same way. Worse still, Fleury in France was playing him false. To meet such a situation taxed all his skill. In the House he had just shown his full power in the famous speech in which, replying to the bitter attack of Windham, he made his deadlier attack on Bolingbroke. But the struggle over foreign policy had to be one of cool craft and vigilant patience.

First he persuaded the king to wait the result of the general election before making a decision, and instructed Harrington to make no promises. Then, having secured through his brother Horace the neutrality of the other important Sea-Power, Holland, he persuaded the king and the Cabinet to assent to his policy of returning a sympathetically neutral answer to Vienna.<sup>1</sup> It was at this conjuncture that the general election fell; and the result was a distinct though not a great fall in Walpole's majority, the importance of which was at once realized by the wire-pulling Newcastle, though Bolingbroke gave up, and Walpole and the queen seem to have remained optimistic.<sup>2</sup> But when, before the election, the baffled Emperor took the course of sending to London a secret agent, the Abbé Strickland,<sup>3</sup> who had been alternately in the pay of both Jacobite and Hanoverian, to intrigue against Walpole in his own sphere, the minister resisted forcibly. Strickland came under a false name, was graciously received by the King and Queen, and had a secret interview with Harrington. Walpole, so commonly accused of overruling all, had patiently argued with his colleagues, never deciding against the majority.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Given by Ewald, pp. 264-5, from Coxe.

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, ii. 187.

<sup>3</sup> As to whom see note in Stanhope, p. 191.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of the elder Horace Walpole, in Coxe's memoir of him, i. 328.



But now he requested that the secret emissary should be politely dismissed; and not only was this done, but the queen wrote to the Empress, positively intimating that England would not engage in the war. And, with a reinforced opposition loudly calling upon him to help the old ally against a combination of France and Spain, he brought the war to an end by sheer diplomatic skill.

He was perfectly impartial. The Emperor having threatened to marry one of his archduchesses to Don Carlos, Walpole took care to let the French Government know of that risk, which might involve another combination of Spain and the Empire. At the same time, he quietly informed Madrid that secret communications were going on between Versailles and Vienna, Fleury in point of fact being in secret communication with everybody. As Lord Morley observes, "The scene is not particularly edifying to those who hope that politics are a branch of morals." But, as he recognizes, the ethic which plays a diplomatic game to end a war is sounder than that which would stand aloof and let it flame. Walpole was not intriguing for any gain to England; and in the end he secured peace by getting something substantial for each belligerent. France wanted Lorraine, whose Duke, Francis, was the husband of the Emperor's daughter, Maria Theresa. To him was offered the reversion of the richer duchy of Tuscany, on the death of the reigning Grand Duke, while Lorraine went to the forlorn Stanislaus, to revert after his death to France. Thus Poland remained under Augustus, as the Emperor had desired; Spain, having secured the Sicilies, gave way as to Tuscany; and France was satisfied to have Lorraine.

It is in retrospect an astonishing way of disposing of lands and populations; and even in that day some challenged the morality of putting the German-speaking population of Lorraine under France. But the people of Lorraine showed small concern on that point; and the transaction hardly needed Walpole's defence, that in



every war with Central Europe France had occupied Lorraine. The "deal" was as legitimate as putting the Sicilies under a Spanish king, or Tuscany under a German. It was said of Italy, indeed, that her people preferred Spanish to Austrian rule because while Spain ruled badly she ruled little;<sup>1</sup> Francis and his successor, Leopold, managed well in Tuscany; and Lorraine, like Alsace, became notably attached to France. And such arrangements were not surprising in an age in which a German king reigned in England, and a French king, with an Italian queen, in Spain, employing first an Italian and afterwards a Dutch minister, adventurers both.<sup>2</sup>

The upshot was (1) a prolongation of the peace period for England, she being, as Walpole justly boasted to Queen Caroline in 1734, spared the loss of a single son in warfare in a year in which fifty thousand men were killed in Europe; and (2) the restoration of peace to the Continent until Frederick the Great opened a new era of brutal aggression in 1740. Weighed against that worthy, Walpole seems to deserve better of mankind. D

It is, however, over the Spanish War, unwillingly entered into by Walpole in 1739, that we realize most fully his superiority at once in wisdom and in conscientiousness to his opponents. There can now be little doubt that the mass of men of all classes who shouted for that war were thinking not merely of redressing grievances but of capturing the gold and silver mines of Spain in the New World.<sup>3</sup> The grievances of English traders against Spain were indeed being as vehemently proclaimed as any that have roused the people to aggressive war before or since; and they were on the whole plausible as compared with, say, the case for the Boer War in 1899. For though in both cases it was taken for granted that Englishmen had the right to force themselves on

<sup>1</sup> Lemontey, *Histoire de la Régence*, i. 136.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Lemontey, i. 101.

<sup>3</sup> That was the opinion of Burke, and it has been endorsed by Lord Morley, *Walpole*, p. 223.



other peoples to the extent of denying the alien's right to enforce his own laws in his own territories, the complaint against Spain was that she resisted not passively but savagely.

Under the Spanish system, all non-Spanish trade with the Spanish colonies in the New World was barred, with the exception of that done by the single ship authorized by the Treaty of Utrecht to traffic in those regions. The farce of that traffic is well known: the ship was followed by any number of tenders, who filled her up night after night when she had been discharged by day. But a purely contraband trade was carried on by adventurers who could make no pretence of treaty rights. It was not denied by anybody that many English ships, and at times whole squadrons, traded with the Spanish American territories in defiance of the Spanish Navigation Laws; though of course with the active connivance of Spanish colonists. They would enter Spanish harbours under pretence of refitting, and so at times trade under the very eyes of the Spanish authorities.<sup>1</sup> Entrance for refitting was allowed by the treaties of 1667 and 1670, which were re-affirmed by the treaty of Seville in 1729; but there were express provisions against any trade save under license; and when the *uti possidetis* clause of the treaties was made a ground of claim to cut logwood in the Bay of Campeachy, on the score that logwood *had* been cut there in the past, the case assumed the aspect of comedy, such cutting of logwood having been

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, *The Bourbon Kings of Spain*, 1813, iii. 300, cited by Stanhope, ii. 279. Stanhope complains of the meagreness of the treatment of these matters in Macpherson's *History of Commerce*. But it would still have been a delicate undertaking in Macpherson's day, as it was in that of Anderson, on whom he founded, to record how English traders had flouted the Navigation Laws of Spain while England enforced equally exclusive Navigation Laws of her own, and had gone to war because Spain at times vigorously resisted. Cunningham, in our own times, is no more informative on this point than Macpherson. (*English Industry and Commerce*, ii. 473 sq.)



purely piratical. It was, indeed, an industry resorted to by the buccaneers of Jamaica when they were prevented from carrying on their primary avocation ;<sup>1</sup> but technically it was no more legalized than that.

Yet the logwood claim was a main item<sup>2</sup> in a popular agitation which reached highwater-mark in what Burke later unwarrantably called "the fable of Jenkins's ears." A derisory view of that episode was handed down in the Whig line ; but the canonical tale needs no correction to make its sequel memorably absurd. Robert Jenkins was a ship captain who in 1738 testified before a Committee of the House of Commons<sup>3</sup> that *seven years before* one of his ears had been partly cut and partly torn off by the commander of a Spanish *guarda costa* who had boarded his ship under the asserted Spanish right of search. For seven years, saith history, he had carried that ear on his person, exhibiting it to all who cared to see, yet without arousing any movement of national indignation. The story had been told in full and indignant detail in several London newspapers in June, 1731,<sup>4</sup> and a very shocking story of Spanish brutality it was, though, as Carlyle hints, the question whether Jenkins had been smuggling remains obscure. Such a narrative might very well have aroused indignation in Parliament, as it clearly did outside ; but, whether or not Jenkins's story was at that time doubted by the Opposition, they took no action on it, busy as Bolingbroke and Pulteney were against Walpole. In 1738, the managers having decided to work the two rather disparate policies of demanding reduction of the army and a declaration of

<sup>1</sup> Nicholls, *Recollections*, 1822, ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, ii. 280.

<sup>3</sup> Coxe doubted his having been examined, but Stanhope traced the entry in the Journals ordering his attendance.

<sup>4</sup> As Carlyle discovered in his omnivorous research for his *Friedrich*. Of course he could not be content to give the simple extracts, which he puts into Carlylese ; but he claims to give, "after one sifting, accurately the substance." (B. VIII, ch. iv : People's ed. iii. 22-3.)



war against Spain, Jenkins, with his ear, entered the portals of history as aforesaid; and, being asked how he had felt when so barbarously mutilated, affirmed: "I committed my soul to God and my cause to my country."

The evidence goes to show that that expression decided the declaration of war. Pulteney announced, in a heroic transport: "We have no need of allies to enable us to command justice: the story of Jenkins will raise volunteers."<sup>1</sup> It certainly raised the wind for the Opposition. One of the Whig comments, preserved by Nicholls,<sup>2</sup> is to the effect that a sceptical member of the Committee asked Jenkins to remove the wig which he habitually wore, so as to prove that he really lacked an ear *in situ*. "But this proposal was received with horror by the Opposition. They asked if gentlemen wished to add to the wrong suffered by Captain Jenkins in thus subjecting him to the humiliation of exposing his disfigured person to public view." Stanhope, fallaciously arguing that Jenkins had certainly lost an ear or part thereof, *because* he always carried with him, wrapped in cotton wool, an object so described,<sup>3</sup> proceeds to cite from the reputable historian Tindal the tale that Jenkins's ear had been lost "on another occasion, and perhaps, as seems to be insinuated, in the pillory."<sup>4</sup> But this appears to be, as Carlyle pronounces, pure calumny;<sup>5</sup> though, for that matter, had it been true, the ear could have done its work all the same.<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary History*, x. 850.

<sup>2</sup> *Recollections*, ii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Montagu Burrows writes (*History of the Foreign Policy of Great Britain*, ed. 1896, p. 57) that Professor Laughton lately found a document which proved the "fable" to be "no fable at all, but actual fact." A citation of Carlyle would have been more to the purpose.

<sup>4</sup> Stanhope, ii. 283.

<sup>5</sup> *Friedrich*, ed. cited, iii. 263.

<sup>6</sup> See Carlyle, iii. 283, for a curious account of the use of the tale at a masquerade. And see vol. iv. p. 84 for an account of



oddest point in the episode is that whereas Jenkins alleged that his men had been put to the torture, and he strung up three times by the neck to the yardarm, these matters passed unnoticed, the whole mind of the nation being centred on the ear.

It is worth noting that here we have a war forced on the Government by "the people." It had indeed been called for by the Opposition; but it was wholly against the mind of Walpole; and though George II was, as usual, in favour of a warlike policy, he was satisfied to let his minister follow his well-tried course of negotiation. But the general clamour waxed more and more formidable. It would have availed nothing for Walpole to remind the House that Jenkins was but one of a number of ostensible English smugglers<sup>1</sup> defying the navigation laws of Spain; that a Spanish smuggler caught defying those of England would stand to lose more than his ear; and that acts of much greater violence occurred in our own preventive service, in fights or scuffles with our own smugglers. The one plausible plea of the traders was that their ships were sometimes searched when they did not happen to be smuggling; but it was rather effectively outweighed by the fact that they had frequently smuggled without being caught. Keene, the British agent at Madrid, put the case very judiciously:—

Upon the whole, the state of our dispute seems to be, that the commanders of our vessels always think that they are unjustly taken if they are not taken in actual illicit commerce, even though proof of their having loaded in that manner be found on board of them; and the Spaniards, on the other hand, presume that they have a right of seizing . . . in order to search for proofs of fraud. . . . Till a medium be found out

how the "monster" who tore off Jenkins's ear was "got hold of" at Porto Bello in 1739 and "magnanimously pardoned"—a plain "fable," this time.

<sup>1</sup> The question of the guilt or innocence of Jenkins was not debated: had he been proved a smuggler it would not have mattered in the popular mind.



between those two notions . . . we shall be continually negotiating in this country for redress without ever being able to procure it.<sup>1</sup>

Walpole was faced by the fact that, as against all such grievances and all appeals for redress, Spain had the standing grievance of Gibraltar in addition to the perpetual English smuggling; and he seems to have been one of the few Englishmen of his day who could look at a national dispute from the point of view of the foreigner as well as from his own. Above all, he knew that France stood ready to join hands with Spain; and he was much concerned not to face that conjunction in a bad cause. It is not to be supposed, of course, that his conscience was troubled by the fact that the indignant England which went into convulsions over Jenkins's ear was at that time the great slave-trading nation in the world; and this under the *Assiento* wrung from Spain at the Peace of Utrecht. Spain, the tyrant Power, was in this matter relatively the less guilty. When Las Casas, stirred to passion by the frightfully rapid extinction of the native races under Spanish oppression, caught at the idea of saving them by systematically importing the hardier negro,<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Ximenes, reversing the decision of Ferdinand, absolutely refused his assent,<sup>3</sup> though he had listened sympathetically to the appeal for the native "Indians" of Central America and the islands.

It is indeed doubtful whether, had Ximenes lived, even his power as Regent for the young Charles V would have enabled him to resist the economic pressure which first enslaved the natives of the conquered regions and later brought in a negro population in the islands to

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the Duke of Newcastle, December 13, 1737, in Stanhope, ii. 279-80.

<sup>2</sup> This idea was not originated by Las Casas. Negroes were being sent in batches by the king to work in the mines of Hispaniola. Helps, *Spanish Conq. in America*, ed. Oppenheim, 1900, i. 155, 173.)

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Robertson, *History of America*, Bk. IV: *Works*, ed. 1821, vii. 253.



replace them. To renounce slavery, in the then state of European enterprise, would have meant causing the virtual collapse of the Spanish conquest; for the Utopia of Las Casas was plainly unrealizable. But it was first the Portuguese and then the English who did most to develop the African slave trade. The monopoly granted by the young Charles V, in pursuance of the fatal scheme of Las Casas, to some of his Flemish hangers-on, was by them duly sold to Genoese, who put so high a price on their negroes that the half-ruined Spaniards of Hispaniola could hardly afford to buy any.<sup>1</sup> It was English enterprise, from the days of Elizabeth onwards, that mostly supplied slaves to the West Indies and the English colonies; and though the trade reached its maximum about the end of the eighteenth century, Liverpool in 1730 had already fifteen ships devoted to the trade.<sup>2</sup>

If we cannot suppose Walpole to have been much concerned on this head, however, still less so were the "Patriots," who sought war with Spain mainly because Walpole was averse from it. There had never been in England, thus far, nearly so much opposition to the new enslavement of savage races as had arisen among the Catholic clergy of Spain after the Spanish conquests in the New World. Clarkson<sup>3</sup> traces the beginnings of the English opposition from the time of Baxter and of George Fox, who saw it in operation at Barbados; and he notes pronouncements by the poets from Milton to Shenstone.<sup>4</sup> But though Baxter wrote indignantly, and Fox feelingly, there was never in that age any such religious movement of anti-slavery as had arisen in Catholic Spain two centuries before.<sup>5</sup> To the English world which raved

<sup>1</sup> Robertson, as cited, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> *Liverpool and Slavery*, 1884, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> *Hist. of the Abol. of the Slave Trade*, ed. 1839, chs. iii, iv.

<sup>4</sup> *Paradise Lost*, xii, 25 sq., 64 sq.; Pope, *Essay on Man*, i, 107; Thomson, *Seasons*; *Summer* (Bell's ed. of Works, ii, 92); Savage, *The Injured Africans*; Shenstone, *Elegy* 20th.

<sup>5</sup> Cp. Dr. Robertson, *History of America: Works*, ed. 1821, vii. 245; Helps, as cited, Bk. IV, ch. ii; Bk. VIII, ch. ii; also vol. iii. 86, 150.



over Jenkins's ear, the grievances of captured and enslaved negroes counted for absolutely nothing.

Walpole's aversion from the war, like his political preferences in general, was further grounded on a perception of the futility of the course proposed by his opponents. There was, he saw, nothing to be gained from a new war with Spain that was worth reckoning against the costs and the inevitable commercial losses—to say nothing of the grave danger of a combination of Spain and France; whereas he could hope to obtain real concessions by negotiation. His famous comment<sup>1</sup> on the joyous ringing of the church bells when war was declared: "They may ring their bells now; before long they will be wringing their hands," expressed his clear forecast of the inevitable course of things—the sure loss of trade through war with the principal customer, and the consequent distress. And that very forecast is the ground for the common verdict that, being thus convinced of the wrongness of the war, he ought to have resigned and left the conduct of it to his opponents, whose failure to fulfil the nation's hopes would have brought about his reinstatement with increased prestige.<sup>2</sup> But that criticism, which commonly ignores the actual fact that Walpole did repeatedly offer his resignation to the king,<sup>3</sup> ignores the wide difference between Walpole's situation and that of any statesman of the next age or the next century.

To-day, a minister so placed *must* resign; and the sovereign equally *must* accept his resignation. Walpole, much more constitutional in his principles than those who assailed him, took the correct course, and tendered his resignation again and again; but always the King implored him not to "desert" him in his difficulties;

<sup>1</sup> Coxe's *Walpole*, i. 618.

<sup>2</sup> So Stanhope, Ewald, and others.

<sup>3</sup> This we know expressly from his brother Horace (Coxe, i. 625). Stanhope merely says "it is alleged," giving no details. Ewald (p. 357, *note*) rejects the testimony. Lord Morley accepts it.



and the queen on her deathbed had asked his promise to stand by the king after she had gone. In Walpole's day, as in North's day, such appeals had a force that cannot now be felt in any ministerial juncture; for ministers were consciously and primarily the king's servants, and Walpole was an old, much trusted, and much favoured servant. Had Walpole persisted, the chances were at least as good that he would soon be recalled as that the king would permanently and angrily resent his persistence. The question then is whether, as even Lord Morley finally says, he is open to grave moral condemnation because, on the king's urgency, he stayed in office under a parliamentary compulsion to enter on a war which he held to be impolitic and unjust.

The criticism was very emphatically pronounced by Macaulay; and it is common to say that nobody now disputes it. But a cognate verdict of Macaulay's, to begin with, was retorted upon with much force by Peel, who noted how the essayist, who had blamed Walpole for not persisting in measures which he found to be intensely unpopular, had himself justified, in his own day, the abstention of Whig ministers from measures declared to be just and known to have the support of at least half the people.<sup>1</sup> Macaulay decides that though Walpole understood the true interests of his country better than any of his rivals, he never scrupled to sacrifice those interests in order to retain office. "The governing principle of his conduct was *neither* love of peace nor love of war, *but* love of power."<sup>2</sup> The impeachment is ingenious, but sophistical. No one will pretend that Walpole did not love power. But a man may love power *and* peace. And it is surely a question to be argued whether Walpole could not reasonably hold that less harm would be done if he held the helm than if it passed into other hands.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Stanhope, in Stanhope's *Miscellanies*, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Essay in Horace Walpole's Letters, 1833, ed. cited, i. 276-7.



Those who confidently condemn him do not pause to ask into whose hands power would have passed had Walpole resigned at once on finding the national temper ungovernably set on war; and to what extent those hands were competent. Ostensibly the opposition was a cabal of Whigs and Tories; and Pulteney and Windham were its leading figures; for Pitt did not yet figure as "ministrable." Had Walpole simply resigned and left that motley group to take office, he could have counted with something like certainty on grave mismanagement. When he ultimately did resign, the whole Opposition group proved so impotent that the administration remained in the hands of Walpole's juniors, the Pelhams. For him to resign at once, then, would have been to let the nation incur probable disaster, in the sure hope that such disaster would restore him to power. And to do this, according to Macaulay, would have been to sacrifice his own interests to those of the nation! There appears to be something wrong with the reasoning. If Walpole was looking solely to his own interests he did miscalculate; for he had not only to share the unpopularity of the war but to let his pro-war colleagues control it, which, after his good start, they did badly. But to say this is not to convict him of self-seeking.

It would be fair to say, indeed, that for Walpole, while vigour remained to him, there was no satisfying life possible save that of affairs, of which he was the consummate master. To him the life of the library was closed: there is a pathetic account of his wistful attempts in his last years to find an interest in books, and the failure. As first minister, he was doing the one work that it lay in him to do, and that certainly no rival could have done half so well. And, with all his sensualism, it was no light task. Over foreign affairs alone he toiled incredibly. Disavowing claim to special knowledge of them, he took more pains to get exact knowledge than did any of his critics, reading endless dispatches, and writing his own with his own hand. Sheer labour was



half the secret of that superiority of judgment which the Danish ambassador noted in him over most who claimed to know foreign affairs intimately.<sup>1</sup>

In retrospect, it is less a passion for office than a stoical persistence in thankless duty that seems to be his outstanding quality. As he told the House of Commons, it was easy enough for him to find popularity by advocating war, in which case the opposition would have become the champions of peace.<sup>2</sup> Not that he ever winced under the perpetual cannonade of obloquy from his rivals. To read of their councils of war in his last Parliament, their eager plans to denounce everything he did, to thwart every measure, to harass him to exhaustion, is to have a vision of a pack of hounds yelping at the heels of a wearied bull, sustained by the hope of having him down at last. But Walpole never quailed before that aspect of things. In parliamentary courage he has never been surpassed; if courage be the name for an imperturbable confidence in himself.<sup>3</sup> It was only the visible weakening of his supports that seemed ever to disquiet him; and it was only in the last years, as his son tells us, that he who in his home had ever been the incarnation of good cheer began to be silent and anxious. It was indeed a grim game that he finally had to play. The queen, his great ally and sagacious sympathizer, died in 1738; and it fell to him to invite the bereaved husband to bring over to England the favourite mistress to whose society in Hanover he had latterly been wont to fly, without any respect for appearances.<sup>4</sup> The minister had even counselled the queen to suggest this

<sup>1</sup> *Orford Papers*, December 24, 1734, cited by Ewald, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, ii. 282, 287.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Montagu Burrows has thought fit to say (work cited, p. 84) that "Walpole, unlike an Englishman, had dreaded" war with France at the same time as with Spain. In the same paragraph, the Professor had just asserted that after Walpole's death Englishmen in general were full of dread of war in general.

<sup>4</sup> See the full narrative of Mr. W. H. Wilkins, *Caroline the Illustrious*, ed. 1904, pp. 546, 568 sq., 580 sq.



course years before; and she, after weeping bitterly, had stoically consented; but it was only after she was gone that Sophia de Walmoden, who had prudently declined the previous invitation, was brought over and created Countess of Yarmouth.<sup>1</sup>

To do the king justice, we should note that he never abandoned Walpole, as Walpole's enemies, typified by Chesterfield, thought he would after the queen's death. It was the caballing of Newcastle and others against him inside, the failing faith of his own party—the apparent result of the growing volume of public vituperation from the other side, always being newly recruited by malcontents—that “let down” the old leader. Lacking his innate courage for a chosen course no less than his vision for the right course, they progressively failed in their support. Newcastle absolutely obstructed his negotiations with Spain by sending dispatches under the king's authority which roused resentment at Madrid; and the reckless folly and dishonesty of the Spanish envoy in London made matters worse.<sup>2</sup> Neglecting no available means of counter-pressure, Walpole sent a squadron of ten ships of the line to the Mediterranean and many single ships to the West Indies; offered letters

<sup>1</sup> The last case of such a promotion in English history (Stanhope, ii. 275). Mr. Ewald (p. 325) bestows much virtuous declamation on Walpole for his attitude on these matters. We have only to take note of how Lady Suffolk had been acclaimed and panegyricized by leaders in literature and religion, including Pope and Swift, to realize that such declamation is wholly irrelevant to the English life of that age. And Walpole, besides, had taken his own advantage of the standards of his time. Immediately after his first wife's death he secretly married Mary Skeritt, who had already borne him a daughter. It seems to have been when she was known to be seriously ill that the marriage was made public in 1737, for the lady survived the announcement only a few months. Ewald (pp. 313–14) collects the scandals concerning her. Walpole certainly cannot have strengthened his public position by obtaining from the crown a patent giving the daughter of this union the same rank and precedence as if she were legitimate.

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, ii. 283–4.



of marque and reprisal to merchants; sent troops and stores to Georgia, where a boundary dispute with the Spaniards was on foot; and directed British merchants in the Spanish ports to register their goods with notaries in view of the risk of a rupture. So far did he make headway at Madrid that several prizes captured by the Spaniards were restored, with their crews; while the various counter-claims for compensation were in process of being balanced. A convention, amounting to a preliminary treaty, was actually signed on January 14, 1739.<sup>1</sup>

But the war-mongering movement in England, and the corresponding movement in Spain, effectually blocked further progress towards a settlement. Spanish counter-claims accumulated; and the terms of the convention, leaving open the right of search and other burning questions, only added fuel to the fire of war-passion in England. In the debate on the Address in the Lords, Carteret and Chesterfield excelled themselves in hostile speeches; Argyle joined the opposition; and the Prince of Wales gave his first vote on that side, so that the majority fell greatly. In the Commons, Pitt made the most powerful speech he had yet delivered, an unmeasured denunciation of the convention, at his highest oratorical pitch. But there had to be "many a sheaf of arrows spent" before Walpole could be pulled down.

After his reply, made with an undiminished efficiency, his majority on the division was found to have fallen to 28, the figures being 260 to 232. Thereupon the opposition resorted to the theatrical device of a secession. Windham, fevered to something like frenzy by his long and vain struggle against Walpole, delivered a speech which was felt at the time to be a wild bid for commitment to the Tower; and Pelham was actually about to make such a motion, when Walpole checked him by rising to deliver a reply in which he struck Windham as hard as he had once struck Bolingbroke, and with a far sterner ring in his voice, taxing him with old treasons,

<sup>1</sup> The Convention of Pardo. Stanhope, ii. 285-6.



and thanking him for his now open enmity to his king. The "secession" that followed was a notable fiasco. It enabled Walpole to pass with ease and speed the measures he had on hand, one being the bill enabling the "sugar colonies" to develop their trade with foreign countries; another being the subsidy to Denmark by which Walpole ended the quarrel which had arisen with that State over the purchase of a castle from Holstein by George II, as Elector of Hanover. Denmark was believed to be on the way to an alliance with France and Sweden against England; and the subsidy not only made her friendly but bound her to supply six thousand soldiers if required.

And still he strove to come to terms with Spain. By this time, however, Spanish passion was burning as high as English; the negotiations became more and more disturbed; and at length, after putting a stiff ultimatum, which was refused as he expected it would be, Walpole had to declare war with Spain on October 19, 1739, thereby eliciting wild national rejoicings.

How completely his forecasts were fulfilled and those of the people and of the Opposition defeated is matter of familiar history. No charge can lie against Walpole of not taking up the war with energy. He strengthened the fleet in the Mediterranean, sent another to the West Indies, called on Holland for her treaty troops, enlisted men quickly to raise the regiments to their full strength, raised a force of marines, and—with no censure from "Patriots" or people—set the naval press-gang at work in every port and market town. The new expedition to Porto Bello, under Admiral Vernon, a Tory M.P., was a complete success; that to Cartagena a still more complete failure. To lay on Walpole's peace administration the blame of that failure, on the score that it took four months to fit it out, and that it arrived at the wrong season,<sup>1</sup> is plainly unjust. Four months was

<sup>1</sup> So Morris, *Early Hanoverians*, p. 104. Carlyle illustrates his own mental processes by asserting, in his laboriously satirical



reasonably quick work, at that period, for what was then a large expeditionary force ;<sup>1</sup> and the failure would have taken place at any season with a naval and a military commander at daggers drawn in a joint command as were Vernon and Wentworth. Thus ill-served, Walpole seems to have left the conduct of the war largely to Newcastle and the rest who had been so warmly in favour of it, so that the failures should not seem to result from lukewarmness on his side.

In the nature of the case, no gain was to be reaped in such a contest. It lasted for nine years, becoming merged in the new European strifes set up by Frederick in 1740, which Walpole, had he been left with a free hand, would probably have arrested at an early stage. As it was, the war outwent his life ; and in its tenth year the very men who had clamoured against him to have it begun, "cheerfully concurred in a Peace that left the Right of Search altogether unnoticed and secured."<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, the developments of the war had brought about the Rebellion of 1745—another fulfilment of a warning of Walpole's at which his enemies had habitually jeered. Escaping disaster on that side, the nation lost immensely by direct destruction and capture of shipping, and still more by the loss of trade to which Walpole had pointed as the one certain outcome of such a war.

We have, finally, the explicit assurance of Burke that some years after the event it was his fortune to converse with many of the principal opponents of Walpole, and with those who "principally excited that clamour" for war with Spain ; and that "none of them, no not one, did in the least defend the measure, or attempt to justify sketch of Walpole (*Friedrich*, iv. 273), that "of all his working Apparatuses there was none in a working state but the Parliamentary one," after having avowed (*id.* p. 88) that "*the English navy is in tolerable order at that period.*" The inadequacy of the army was no fault of Walpole's.

<sup>1</sup> Twenty-seven sail of the line and, by some accounts, over ten thousand troops ; by others, seven thousand.

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, ii. 297.



their conduct, which they as freely condemned as they would have done in commenting upon any proceeding in history in which they were totally unconcerned.”<sup>1</sup>

And still we have writers on history who condemn Walpole, not as Burke condemned him, for not flatly denying the whole case made out against Spain, or as Stanhope and Macaulay and Morley have condemned him, for not insisting on resigning rather than enter upon the war, but for having been unwilling to go to war in the circumstances. Professor Montagu Burrows condemns Walpole (1) for not supporting the Emperor against France and Spain in the War of the Polish Succession (saying nothing of the Emperor's share in the crime of Russia against Poland); (2) for permitting France and Spain then to aggrandize themselves and jointly extend the “Bourbon” power; (3) for hesitating to make war on Spain because either of scruple about the cause or fear of France joining her, and for “disgraceful” duplicity in accepting strong pleas for the war without meaning to act on them.<sup>2</sup>

No one could gather from the narrative of Professor Burrows that there had been any English smuggling in Spanish America, or that England had navigation laws of her own, under which she rigorously checked the trade of her colonies and grossly oppressed that of Ireland. And least of all could they guess that the “Right of Search” was actually left undisputed when the war came to an end. The Chichele Professor's position is that it was England's duty and mission to fight France and Spain at all costs and at all risks, refusing to let Spain impose such restrictions on trade and navigation as she herself imposed to the best of her ability. Thus could history still be written at the close of the nineteenth century.

Being concerned to admit that the war with Spain was just and necessary, not merely by the official admis-

<sup>1</sup> *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, i. Bohn ed. of Works, v. 194.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Foreign Policy of Great Britain*, ed. 1897, ch. v



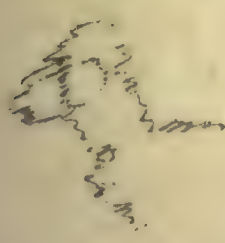
sions of Walpole's Government but on the judicial merits, Professor Burrows is driven to deal with Burke's double declaration that "a war with Spain was a war of plunder," of "extreme injustice," and that the leading promoters of it all admitted as much within a few years. The Professor admits<sup>1</sup> that the latter assertion "seems too explicit a statement to be set down as mere rhetoric," but pleads that "it must not be taken for more than it is worth." Advancing beyond this safe position, he argues (1) that Chatham cannot be supposed to have been one of those referred to by Burke, *because* "his glorious career opened with the debate on the Convention of Pardo, and he always supported "British independence against France and Spain"; (2) that some of the "principal actors" had no doubt been originally governed by party spirit; and that such men, "not having a clear conscience in the matter, forgot in later times how much ground they really had for their action"; and lastly (3) that "in the period of gloom and depression which fell upon the nation soon after the war commenced" men "looked about regretfully for such a leader as even Walpole, with all his faults, had been."

It seems unnecessary to debate such pleas. The whole point about Chatham is that he is understood, on Burke's testimony, to have admitted that he began his "glorious career" very unwisely by his speech on the Convention of Pardo. As for the others, if they forgot that they had a good case, their mental equipment can hardly have been such as to confer weight on their original opinions. Had the Professor argued that Burke in 1796 had become a bad witness, arguing as he then avowedly did for "a war against regicide," he might have put in some doubt Burke's recollection of experiences going back some fifty or more years. But that historical declaration is one of the soberest statements in the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, and has every appearance of being a valid reminiscence.

<sup>1</sup> Work cited, p. 83.



What shall we say then of Burke's criticism of Walpole as never having "manfully put forward the entire strength of his cause," and as having known "the falsehood of the colours which to his own ruin, and guided by a mistaken policy, he suffered to be daubed over that measure"? It amounts to saying that Walpole ought not to have admitted that the English merchants had any grievance against Spain; that he ought openly to have taken Spain's part, and declared, in Burke's words, that "a war with Spain was a war of plunder." It is hardly more necessary to debate this than to debate the reasonings of Professor Montagu Burrows. Spain was no such blameless Power as Burke in old age would seem to have thought; and for Walpole to defend her in that fashion would have been to throw away all his influence at one stroke. It is true that, finding king, Cabinet, country, and many of his own supporters against him, he consented to parliamentary resolutions and a declaration of war which much overstated the case as he knew it, and for that he has incurred and will incur plenty of facile censure. On Frederick's principle, however, that the best general is he who makes fewest mistakes, we may account him the best statesman who commits fewest sins against human well-being. And thus far it will be hard to find one equally tried who either yielded less readily to irresistible pressures in what he saw to be a wrong direction, or seldomer took an evil course of his own choice, in international matters, than did Walpole.





## CHAPTER XIV

### WALPOLE'S FALL

IF there is any sign of loss of efficiency in Walpole at this period, it arises out of his position as conductor of a war in which he did not believe. The "seceders" thought they put their best foot foremost when they came back to the House in 1740 and explained that, having withdrawn because the minister would not do right, they had returned (to fight him) now that he was taking the course they had urged. Walpole met this hamstrung dialectic easily enough; and had the war gone better he might have held power for years. But it was his own forecast that it could not go well; and from the fulfilment of his forebodings he could reap no advantage. The opposition were all the more bent on dragging him down, laying at his door all the failures and refusing him credit for the successes; and the pro-war men in his own party and Cabinet inevitably continued to draw somewhat away from him. It was doubtless the knowledge of the king's opinion on the war that determined many.

It was when he began to realize that he in person, not his party or his cause, had become the mark for an ever-strengthening animosity all around that he began to lose zest. His fighting power had never failed; and his reply on the motion of February, 1741, calling for his dismissal by the king, is as effective a piece of parliamentary polemic as he ever achieved.<sup>1</sup> Sandys opened in a speech in which he disclaimed all personal

<sup>1</sup> See a good account of the debate in Stanhope, iii. 71-9. Walpole's speech is preserved from his own MS.



animosity, avowing the "personal civilities" he had received from Walpole. It was not a weighty indictment; and it may have been a sense of weakness that prompted the absurd suggestion of Wortley Montagu, after the speech of the seconder, that Walpole, after replying, should be ordered to withdraw while the debate continued. Pitt and Pulteney added due asperity; but when Lord Cornbury, a staunch Tory, opposed the motion on broad grounds of parliamentary principle, it was already as good as lost. The attack had indeed been ill-concerted. Windham had died in 1740; and the Pulteney Whigs, who in the past had always consulted him, had now ignored his followers, who were duly resentful. But some played a worthy part. Edward Harley, brother of Oxford, made a memorable effect by recalling how Walpole had prosecuted that statesman in his day, and declaring that none the less he must oppose a motion for dismissal on general grounds without proofs. "I am now, Sir, glad of the opportunity to return good for evil, and to do the honourable gentleman and his family that justice which he denied to mine."<sup>1</sup>

On this point we have no record of Walpole's reply; but on those of the enemy's attack his answers were signally effective; while his counter-sarcasms, his analysis of the opposition into "the Boys, the riper Patriots, and the Tories," and his home-thrust at the heart of the attack, were in the best House of Commons style.

My great and principal crime is my long continuance in office, or, in other words, the long exclusion of those who now complain against me. This is the heinous offence which exceeds all others: I keep them from the possession of that power, those honours and those emoluments to which they so ardently and pertinaciously aspire. I will not attempt to deny the reasonableness and necessity of a party war, but in carrying on that war all principles and rules of justice should not be departed from.

<sup>1</sup> Coxe, Stanhope, iii. 75.



Sandys had in fact avowed, weakly enough, that Walpole's long tenure of power was a main grievance :—

But even let me suppose no oversight, error or crime in his public conduct, and that the people were satisfied with his ministration, the very length of it is in itself a sufficient cause for removing him. In a free government, too long possession of power is highly dangerous.

And there was a destructive force in the reminder that the men who now denounced him, who was not responsible for the army and navy<sup>1</sup> as the cause of the nation's military weakness, had constantly resisted him in his efforts to maintain an adequate standing army, keeping the army weak and yet clamouring for war against strong enemies. On the sheer merits of the debate, the motion was so overwhelmingly repelled, that by common consent the honours lay with Walpole ; and Carte wrote to the Pretender that “ the weak attempt to ruin Sir Robert has established him more firmly in the Ministry : he was never known to have so great a levée as the next morning.”<sup>2</sup> But though, to the intense disgust of Bolingbroke, the genuine Jacobites, and a number of others, declined to vote, and some Tories voted for him, thus giving Walpole a sweeping majority of 184 (290 to 106), the cumulating polemic against him gained influence in the ratio of his new disability. As Carte added to his comment, just cited, “ it is marking him out to the nation ; and ministers once attacked in such a manner, though the attack be defeated, seldom keep their posts long, by reason of the general odium.” Doubtless part of the discouragement that now came upon Walpole was due to his recognition that there was a great tide against him in popular feeling as well as in the course of events. And age—for he was now sixty-

<sup>1</sup> An illustration of the then stage of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility.

<sup>2</sup> Letter in App. to vol. iii. of Stanhope, p. 381.



four—was bringing lassitude to the man of high living and plain thinking.

Two psychological laws stand out in the careers of statesmen: the first being that no man, whatever his faculties or merits, can hold pre-eminent power for many years without setting up a host of hostilities; the second, that a constant play of aspersion has up to a certain point a self-extending power, constantly recognized in long-standing proverbs. Both phenomena arise out of normal human nature: Sandys illustrated the first, and Carte commented the second. Always "the king's favourite" incurs envy and malice, were it only by the number of desires he cannot satisfy, or by the fact that, as first minister, he stands in the way of so many rising ambitions. Even the hereditary king suffers from that natural course of things. "Every time I grant a favour," said Louis XIV, "I make one ingrate and ten offended." "The old king" is generally unpopular; "the young prince," even if he be a scapegrace, a Prince Hal or a Prince Frederick, is relatively a favourite. And the pliability of average humanity to a current of aspersion against any foremost public man is illustrated in every age. It is a normal baseness to speak evil of anyone commonly ill-spoken of, just because talk so runs.

The fuliginous indictment laid against Walpole in the motion praying the king to dismiss him was the largest discharge of soot against him that had yet taken place in Parliament. To Walpole it was but a blast of foul weather; to the nation, coming after so many years of continual dropping from the Bolingbroke crew in their press, it was so much new "scripture," solemnly asseverated malediction that was more or less to be believed. If Walpole reflected historically on the latter ends of statesmen—as he must have done before the point was pressed upon him in that debate—he knew how seldom they could be said to die either popular or powerful. To say nothing of the Buckingham and Essexes, Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell, Strafford, Oliver,



Richelieu, Mazarin, Shaftesbury, Somers, Harley, Albemarle had either fallen or died well hated. Townshend, after a long retirement, had gone (1738), Windham had died beaten (1740); Bolingbroke was permanently beaten. How should the old Minister hope to flourish as a green bay-tree to the end? Was not abdication the British statesman's penalty? "You may get the better of me," he placidly observed to Sandys; "but I am sure no other Minister will ever be able to stand as long as I have done—twenty years." It was indeed "a good run."

When he allowed his Cabinet to overrule him on points of war administration where he thought they were taking unwise risks, he must have been more than half prepared to leave. "I oppose nothing," he is said to have declared in the Cabinet; "I give in to everything, am said to do everything, am to answer for everything, and yet, God knows, I dare not do what I think right." They were denuding Britain of naval defence to strengthen still further the fleet of Sir Challoner Ogle, yet he yielded after protest. "I am of opinion for leaving more ships of Challoner Ogle's squadron behind, but I dare not and I will not make any alteration."<sup>1</sup> The spring of will was slackening. Not that he had ever overridden his Cabinet, as the legend has it; but that in earlier days he would have argued the point till they yielded. And when the general election under the Septennial Act came on in the same year, the swing of the pendulum, as might have been expected, went at last far enough against him to decide his overthrow.

The election was exceptionally well managed against him, and, even apart from treachery, at points very ill-managed on his side. At Westminster, Lord Sundon, the Walpole candidate, was foolish enough to have the polling-booth surrounded by soldiers, the polling-books closed, and the High Sheriff directed to announce the return of the Government candidates—an episode which

<sup>1</sup> Newcastle, letters to Hardwicke, Stanhope, iii. 22.



provoked a violent riot that reverberated all over the country.<sup>1</sup> But even without such blundering, Walpole's majority could not be saved against a crusade financed in the West of England by the Prince, by Duchess Sarah, and by Pulteney; in Scotland by Argyle; and elsewhere by Tory wealth in general. On the evidence of George Bubb Dodington, who had "ratted" on this occasion because he was refused a peerage—a refusal for which Walpole is to be forgiven many things by all honest men<sup>2</sup>—it was in the West Country and in Scotland, swayed by Argyle, that the opposition gains were greatest.<sup>3</sup> Of the whole opposition campaign, the management was undertaken by the highly competent Chesterfield, who naturally never forgave Walpole his old dismissal.

The contest is in our day especially memorable as having been one in which a "Coalition" opposition succeeded. The motion for Walpole's dismissal had failed so completely because the malcontent Whigs had planned it without consulting the Tories. In the election, that snare was carefully guarded against. "The names of Whig and Tory, with all their odious distinctions, were to be blotted out from the vocabulary of the opposition, and the designation of 'true Englishmen' <sup>4</sup> substituted in their stead."<sup>5</sup> And whereas in the ordinary course of things supporters of Walpole might be seen in the company of Pulteneyites—as Walpole might himself be, on occasion, with Pulteney—the vigilant organizers

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, iii. 94.

<sup>2</sup> If they have read Dodington's Diary. But we must note "his one good action, that he spoke up for Byng." In the critical debate, he called Walpole's administration "infamous." Walpole, in replying, described him as "a person of great self-mortification, who for sixteen years had condescended to bear part of the infamy."

<sup>3</sup> Carlyle, who draws a smudgy and confused picture of English national feeling as exhibited by this election (*Friedrich*, iv. 273), entirely overlooks the decisive part played by the Scottish vote.

<sup>4</sup> Clearly this cannot have applied to Scotland!

<sup>5</sup> Ewald, p. 408.



on Pulteney's side directed that throughout the election there should be no such association. There is no mention of a "coupon"; but it would seem that the eighteenth century was not in electioneering science far behind the twentieth. It was, indeed, only after twenty years of that peculiar personal combination of Whigs and Tories against Walpole that such a coalition could then have been accomplished, even for one general election. The extraordinary completeness of its collapse when its one purpose was achieved is hardly less remarkable than the dexterity of its brief accomplishment.

The end of Walpole's administration was now near, as no one knew better than he. Apart from some curious errors of judgment,<sup>1</sup> the last campaign was in the main as well fought by him as any, and as if he meant still to win. But on the first election petition—in those days a good test of party strength in the House, since each party stood woodenly by its man, and the House was the tribunal—his majority was only seven; and on the election of chairman of committees Walpole's nominee, an admittedly unpopular man, who was opposed by a popular one, was beaten by four in a House of 480. The long wild roar of triumph that followed told the tale of twenty years of defeat, now first broken.<sup>2</sup> Even yet there were small ups and downs in the course of business; and it was only after the Christmas recess, in January, 1742, that Pulteney moved for a secret committee of twenty-one to "inquire into the state of the nation," as Walpole had challenged the enemy to do when, on the Address, he had been as usual indicted as the *fons et origo mali* in all things. It appears to have been in the interval that he made his surprising attempt to win over the Prince of Wales—the outside centre of the league against him—by just such an offer as had secured him the support of the Prince's father in 1727. He had always urged the King to give the Prince a proper

<sup>1</sup> See Ewald, pp. 411, 417.

<sup>2</sup> Horace Walpole so commented it.



establishment, with £50,000 a year; but the evidence<sup>1</sup> is to the effect that he now offered the Prince a higher figure on his own account, in order to call off the opposition of the Prince's friends in the House. It failed badly: one of the very few instances in which Walpole miscalculated the venality of one he dealt with—in this case, too, a very worthless prince.

Such a step is to be understood only in the light of one or two others of the expedients of Walpole's latter days to gain votes. That is finally the only plausible description of the enigmatic letter of the "Old Pretender" to Carte in 1739, endorsed in Walpole's writing as handed to him by Carte,<sup>2</sup> which is evidently a reply to some proffer of good offices from Walpole. No one has ever supposed that it was a real offer to take the Jacobite side. In all likelihood Walpole's message had been sent with the king's consent and the reply shown to him, as Horace Walpole tells us happened more than once with such letters.<sup>3</sup> Walpole probably designed by a friendly message to induce the Pretender to turn the Jacobite vote to Walpole's side in the approaching general election; and though this was not done, the Jacobite vote on the Sandys motion may have been so influenced.

Of a different and more creditable kind was Walpole's project, disclosed to Speaker Onslow not long before his fall, to persuade the king to consent to a bill providing that at his death the Electorate of Hanover should be severed from the crown of England.<sup>4</sup> It was a bold scheme for making an end of the apparently indestructible English grudge against the Hanoverian connection and the complications it involved; and its achievement might very well have recovered popularity not only for the House of Hanover but for Walpole—though that would have been the more problematic contingency.

<sup>1</sup> Letter of his son Edward. (Stanhope, iii. 104.)

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, iii. 24, and App. p. 420.

<sup>3</sup> Horace Walpole, *Reminiscences*, ed. 1819, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> Coxe, ii. 571; Stanhope, iii. 23.



But the scheme came to nothing—probably because the king would be averse from it.

There is no report of the doomed minister's reply to Pulteney's motion; but he was declared by his friends to have excelled himself, and we have Pulteney's own testimony to the power of the rejoinder against himself. And though the now anxiously united opposition polled their last cripple,<sup>1</sup> and held up some of Walpole's men by blocking a lock, the motion was defeated by three votes. But of course this meant the end, and, as he wrote to the Duke of Devonshire, "the panic was so great among what I should call my own friends that they all declared my retiring was become absolutely necessary, as the only means to carry on the public business." So he resigned, the king shedding creditable tears at the loss of his faithfullest and ablest servant, who was forthwith raised to the peerage as Earl of Orford and accorded a pension of £4,000.<sup>2</sup>

It is not to be denied that in other respects his retirement lacked the heroic touch which a Chatham could have given it. He advised the king to send for Pulteney and to stipulate that Pulteney should guarantee him, Walpole, against injury. For Walpole was a very matter-of-fact man of his age, and, remembering precedents, determined to take no risks. Pulteney, interviewed by the now duly subservient Newcastle, at first took a high tone, declining office for himself, and refusing to promise immunity to the fallen minister. But after much further negotiation, and incipient trouble on his own side about the division of the spoils of office, he agreed to accept for himself a peerage, with a seat in the Cabinet, making the Earl of Wilmington (the inept

<sup>1</sup> The story runs that the Prince remarked to General Churchill on the Government's polling of "the lame, the halt and the blind," and that the General jested back: "The lame on our side, the blind on yours."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Which, however, was not paid to him till some years later, when embarrassments compelled him to apply for it to Pelham, who in his mean way gave it grudgingly.



Spencer Compton of old days) First Lord of the Treasury, Sandys Chancellor of the Exchequer, Carteret Secretary of State, and the Marquis of Tweeddale Secretary of State for Scotland.

One of the sinister aspects of the situation was the private application to Walpole of some of the malcontent Whigs of the Prince's circle, including Pitt, to have his backing in the scramble for office in return for their guarantee of complete immunity.<sup>1</sup> The practical-minded minister, entirely disbelieving in their power to fulfil the transaction, declined it, whereupon they became newly and fiercely resolved on his impeachment. Still stranger was his reconciliation with the Prince of Wales, on the occasion of the Prince's formal reconciliation with his father—a circumstance which seems to throw doubt on the record of his having refused the offer of Walpole before the latter's resignation.

But there is nothing that can be called strange in the rapid collapse of the opposition Coalition. At the first meeting of the combination after the victory, held at the Fountain Tavern in the Strand—which must have had a large room to hold the three hundred who attended—Argyle acridly complained of the allotment of all the places to the Whigs (he had coveted for himself the Scottish Office), pleading for a “Broad Bottom” arrangement—or, as we should now say, a Coalition; and Pulteney hotly protested against the criticisms passed upon him by “the superficial vulgar” who thought that the division of offices could be settled by a whole party in conclave. When the meeting broke up, the Coalition was practically in ruins.<sup>2</sup> Walpole had foreseen as much. Though

<sup>1</sup> This we have on the authority of Glover (*Memoirs of a Celebrated Character*, 1813, p. 3), who testifies that he had it from the Prince, and from Dr. Ayscough, Lyttelton's brother-in-law. Lord Morley accepts the story; Von Ruville (*Chatham*, Eng. tr. i. 185) rejects it as regards Pitt.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Stanhope, iii. 116–18; and Ewald, pp. 427–30; both citing Lord Percival's pamphlet, *Faction Detected* (ascribed by some to Lord Egmont).



Argyle was made Master of the Ordnance and Carteret Secretary of State in place of Hardwicke, one of Walpole's dissidents, his adherents, Yonge and Pelham, were kept on as Secretary at War and Paymaster of the Forces, and Tory claims in general were rebuffed. Thus the administration remained Whig; and the Tories, as a party, had gained nothing. When Bolingbroke rushed back from France to reap his share in the victory, he found himself once more and once for all baffled, being entirely disregarded.

The most piquant aspect of the history, from Walpole's point of view, was the relegation of Pulteney to the peerage. Walpole had offered him this long before, and Pulteney, a rich man, had refused. Now Walpole advised the king, on Pulteney's first refusal, to press the offer, on the score that Pulteney, declining to take a leading office, must have some distinction. It was like the "forcing" of a card by a conjurer on the person who is invited to pick one from the pack, and Pulteney was caught on the second time of asking; for his statement that he had "demanded" a peerage came only after his refusal and subsequent acceptance. The old prestidigitator, on learning the result, went home chuckling wickedly over this uncommon fashion of ensnaring an adversary. "I have turned the key of the closet on him," he cried to his son, suiting the gesture to the word.<sup>1</sup> And he had. As he foresaw, Pulteney's acceptance of a peerage quashed at once his popularity, theretofore unexampled; and Pulteney saw as much when it was too late. It is said that when he received the patent of his earldom of Bath he flung it on the floor and trampled on it. Years afterwards, he told Lord Shelburne that in 1742, when he and his coadjutors tried to frame a policy, he lost his head, and had to go out of town for three or four days to keep his senses. But he never had any head for the great task of steering the ship of State, from which he so long and so desperately strove to expel Walpole, the

<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole, *Reminiscences*, p. 74; Stanhope, iii. 123.



consummate captain. He became a political nullity, drowned in general contempt, the moment he accepted his peerage. Walpole and he met not long afterwards in the Upper Chamber, and the former tranquilly commented their case. "Here we are, my lord, the two most insignificant fellows in England."<sup>1</sup>

This note of serene humour is struck again and again in the relations of Walpole with his antagonists. It seems to be a specialty of English politics, with its long tradition of ordered struggle—only in our latter days upset—that the leading foemen can exchange unembittered banter, and even kindly courtesies, in the pauses of the hottest strife. Pulteney in those days always sat on the Treasury bench; and in the last great debate, when Walpole had replied, his foe cried admiringly, "Well, nobody can do what you can!" "Yes," said Walpole; "Yonge did better." "No," declared Pulteney, "it was fine, but not of that weight with what you said."<sup>2</sup> In the earlier debate on Sandys's motion had occurred the well-known episode of Walpole's error in a quotation from Horace: "*Nil conscire sibi, nulli pallescere culpæ*," on which Pulteney pounced, declaring that the right honourable gentleman's Latin was as false as his logic, since Horace had written *nullâ pallescere culpâ*. Walpole rashly bet a guinea against the better scholar, and when the Clerk of the House gave his decision, handed over the coin,<sup>3</sup> which Pulteney held up to the House with the observation: "It is the only public money I have had for many years, and it shall be the last." This in the tense grapple for victory. And Pulteney, earlier in his long campaign, had asked from Walpole a deanery for a friend of his, and got one.<sup>4</sup>

After the downfall, Walpole met his other enemies

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, iii. 124.

<sup>2</sup> H. Walpole to Mann: Stanhope, iii. 106.

<sup>3</sup> The guinea, says Stanhope, was donated to the British Museum in 1828 by Lady Murray.

<sup>4</sup> Coxe, iii. 46; Morley, p. 108.



with undiminished good nature. At a royal levée, where the king was overjoyed to see him, he chatted long and jovially with Chesterfield and Earl Granville (Carteret), of whom the first had organized the last election against him and the second had moved his dismissal in the House of Lords. To him came Granville for support in the Cabinet against the Pelhams—a support which, however, Walpole would not long give, though he had jestingly told Granville, in Newcastle's presence, to come to him to save him if the Duke sought to overturn him. Granville was the least fitted for responsible control of all the leading men of his group—a cracked scholar, a wild wit, and a toper. Pulteney had shown *his* lack of judgment in selecting him for nomination as Secretary for Foreign Affairs. The two took office together in 1746, when the Pelham combination had resigned to compel the king to dismiss Granville; and two days saw them in and out, utterly unable to form a Government. Such, as Lord Morley remarks, were the men who had led the opposition to the great administration of Walpole. Excellent scholars both, brilliant wits and debaters, they were devoid of the political sagacity that had made Walpole great. Carteret, alone of the statesmen of his day, could talk German with George I. Walpole had to fall back on dog-Latin. But through that medium he ruled England as Carteret never could.

He emerged, finally, unharmed from the ordeal of the secret committee appointed by the parliamentary majority to inquire into his official conduct during the previous ten years. The appointing of this committee is in harmony with the story that the Prince's friends had offered him immunity in consideration of his support, and that they were the more rancorous when he refused. But it was Tories who tried to form a plan for "impeaching" him; and it was a Tory who put the first motion for the committee (March, 1742), though Pitt and other "Patriots" supported it. Pulteney, absent through illness, dissuaded his friends from supporting the motion, and it was



accordingly defeated. This brought upon him a storm of savage abuse, outgoing any that had fallen upon Walpole; whereupon he begged the Tories to move again, which they did, substituting "ten years" for the twenty named in the first motion as the period to be investigated. This time, Pulteney weakly supported, deprecating rancour, and begging not to be put on the committee; but when Walpole's son Horace spoke in his father's defence, Pitt again attacked, and the motion was carried by a majority of seven—252 to 245.<sup>1</sup>

The "committee of examination" appointed to select the members for the committee of inquiry is said to have sat for twenty-two hours without intermission;<sup>2</sup> and when the names were announced it was found that they included only two decided friends of Walpole. It went to work with such open animus that Sir John Barnard, a leading Tory, dissociated himself from his Tory colleagues. None of the much-desired incriminating evidence was to be found. Paxton, the Solicitor to the Treasury, and Scrope, the aged Secretary, refused to answer questions, and Paxton was actually committed to Newgate. The hunters might well be furious; for we know from Hervey that Walpole had avowed to him such an abuse of the secret service fund by the king as the taking of £1,000 to buy lottery tickets for Madame de Walmoden.<sup>3</sup>

In desperation, the anti-Walpoleans actually introduced, and easily carried through the House of Commons, a bill promising to anyone who would give evidence against Walpole a remission of any penalties to which he might become liable by his disclosures. This bold bid for perjury<sup>4</sup> was, however, thrown out by the House of Lords,

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, iii. 126-7.

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope, citing H. Walpole to Mann, April 1, 1742, and Bishop Secker's Diary: "Only one member fainted from the fatigue."

<sup>3</sup> Hervey's *Memoirs*, ed. 1884, iii. 288 (ch. xxxvii).

<sup>4</sup> Cp. Horace Walpole, cited by Stanhope, iii. 128.



Carteret and Hardwicke opposing it, the latter in an extremely powerful speech, while Chesterfield warmly supported. So high did Tory passion run in the Commons that Lord Strange, son of the Earl of Derby, moved a resolution that the action of the Lords was "an obstruction of justice"; a course which had to be outvoted by the official majority. Once more the Committee examined Scrope, who told them he was eighty years of age, but would rather spend the few remaining months of his life in the Tower than betray the king, or, next to him, Lord Orford.<sup>1</sup> In other directions, they seem to have been able to prove that for ten years Walpole had been spending £5,000 a year from the secret service fund on press writers, as other Governments had done before him—so that he "did something for literature" after all! The final Report procured only ridicule for the committee, whose plea that they had been thwarted in their investigation found no sympathy. The mountain in labour had yielded a mouse of inculcation; and by this time the obvious incapacity of the "Patriots" of all schools to do anything commensurate with their undertakings had already gone far to restore Walpole's credit with the middle class.

It is clear that, had Walpole not become incapacitated by his malady of the stone, he would have been called back to office in 1743, if not earlier. The chaos into which the opposition fell in 1742, when its anti-Walpolean members desperately strove to decide on a distinctive policy, is a memorable illustration of the futility in politics at all times, but particularly when constructive theories are only nascent, of a merely doctrinary conception of what ought to be. Many vague notions of reform were already current: the declamation against corruption, if it had meant anything at all, meant a desire for some parliamentary control over the public purse, some revision of the pension list, the place list. The opponents of the Septennial Act clamoured for a new Triennial Act;

<sup>1</sup> H. Walpole to Mann; Stanhope, iii. 129.



and every variety of wild scheme for abolishing taxes and standing armies was ventilated. But the men who had so well organized the election had never dreamt of organizing their ideas. Nothing approaching to a reasoned and popular political propaganda of any kind, in fact, had appeared in England since the Rebellion: the systems of the Harringtons and Sidneys had never been assimilated by anybody; and the men whose inspiration and preparation had consisted solely in their vendetta against Walpole had not a vestige of a scheme for superseding his methods.

As regarded "corruption," in particular, they had won the election very largely by their own expenditure in the purchase of boroughs and the purchase of votes. An election was not then a scene of platform and press propaganda: it was a matter of personal appeal to prejudice, passion, or interest. A House of Commons which not long before had indignantly vetoed any attempt to report its proceedings for the information of the public was not a House elected as a result of any contest of reasoned programs; and when a reasoned program was felt to be imposed on the anti-Walpoleans by their past of declamation, it was not forthcoming. And it may well be, as Lord Morley opines,<sup>1</sup> that the disgust and chagrin of many voters at the utter collapse of all the promises of reform was a main cause in turning the thoughts of many towards a new revolution as the only chance of a real change.

In the three years of retirement from power which closed his life, sinking under an agonizing disease, Walpole was regarded alike by king and courtiers as the oracle to be consulted in every serious emergency. The counsel was admirably given:<sup>2</sup> the disease borne with a stoicism

<sup>1</sup> *Walpole*, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* the advice to the Duke of Cumberland, whom his royal father wanted to marry a deformed Danish princess. The Duke, having sought Walpole's guidance, was told to reply that he would acquiesce on receiving an ample dowry and a suitable establishment. He did so, and the king dropped the subject.



which elicited unwonted admiration from the physician who variously and uselessly operated upon him. And it was in London, whither he had come on a torturing journey to advise the king, that he died in March, 1745, a few months before the outbreak of the Rebellion, an event against which he had warned the incredulous Commons in 1738, and which can be seen to have been a direct outcome of that Spanish War which he strove so long to avert.

That his ruling hand was sadly missed by many in those years we might guess if we had not the testimony; and it is doubtful whether at any time, even while Bolingbroke's long literary vogue availed to cloud his memory, he has not had abundant recognition from posterity as a great statesman. One of his biographers has stated<sup>1</sup> that until the middle of the nineteenth century, when Macaulay and Peel set up a counter-current,<sup>2</sup> "it was the fashion to visit upon the head of Sir Robert Walpole every insult that malice and invective could inspire." "Whenever his name is mentioned by history, his character is described in the harshest and most vindictive terms." That biographer has himself endorsed many of the aspersions he appears to deprecate, with the result of yielding us a portrait lacking in verisimilitude, the whites and blacks standing in inharmonious relation. But though it was left for Lord Morley to expand the vindication of Walpole by Peel into an artistic and satisfying presentment of the man, English critical faculty had not been so scant as to leave such a figure unappreciated through a hundred years. To say nothing of the panegyric of Burke, a James Boswell could stand up for Walpole in 1791 as a wise and benevolent minister; and Johnson

<sup>1</sup> Ewald, *Sir Robert Walpole*, p. 444; *Representative Statesmen*, i. 124.

<sup>2</sup> They had done it long before 1850. Peel wrote his letter to Stanhope in 1833; and Brougham in 1843 paid Walpole a very high tribute (App. to 3rd Series of *Statesmen of the Reign of George III*).



would not then have gainsaid him,<sup>1</sup> any more than would Fox or Pitt, who on that issue would have chimed with Burke, as, substantially, Gladstone did later.<sup>2</sup>

Peel's vindication, indeed, was a turning-point, inasmuch as he convinced Stanhope that he had been misjudging Walpole; and it is significant that the more fully his judges have been qualified by actual experience of political life to judge of Walpole as a practical statesman, the more pronounced has been their praise. Peel, Brougham and Lord Morley vindicate him as no one else since Burke has done; and they are of all the outstanding critics the men of longest close contact with the problems of Parliament and government. Macaulay's experience was much less when he wrote of Walpole; and they outgo him in commendation. And though Bolingbroke has latterly had given to his memory a more affectionate and assiduous biographical devotion than has been bestowed on his rival, it is perhaps safe to say that the credit of the latter has in these days risen as steadily as that of the former has fallen.

Carlyle has inserted in his *Life of Friedrich II* a "Sauerteig" sketch<sup>3</sup> of Walpole, convulsively composed in that grimacing, posturing merryandrew manner which he thought necessary to make history interesting and himself impressive, but which latterly yielded to posterity only a mass of *rococo* rodomontade, encumbering and obscuring his real investigation. For Carlyle it was impossible to see either Walpole or his problems as they were; the moral bankruptcy of his hero-worship of his Pirate King making him the more determined to vilify a ruler who sought and kept peace as zealously as Frederick violated it—to say nothing of his having helped Maria Theresa. The result is one more crude medley of unwilling tribute and crass false witness. Thus sees the judge of men:—

<sup>1</sup> Globe ed., p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Letter in App. to vol. iii. of Lord Morley's *Life*.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. cited, iv. 273 sq.



This task ("to keep the Parish Constable walking and himself float atop") Walpole did in a sturdy, deep-bellied, long-headed John Bull fashion, not unworthy of recognition. A man of very forcible natural eyesight, strong natural heart,—courage in him to all lengths; a very block of oak, or of oak root, for natural strength. He was always very quiet with it, too; given to digest his victuals, and be peaceable with everybody.

This, the testimony of his "natural eyesight," would seem to have been Carlyle's first outline of a portrait of Walpole. But as Walpole had to be ultimately belittled in contrast with the Pirate King, there is grafted on the sketch this preamble:—

Of crooked things made straight by Walpole; of heroic performance or intention, legislative or administrative by Walpole, nobody ever heard; never of the least handbreadth gained from the Night-Realm in England on Walpole's part.

Here speaks the doctrinaire of aggression envisaged as efficiency. The aspersion is disgracefully false, telling either of total ignorance or wilful denigration of Walpole's work. The mere clearing-up of the South-Sea-Bubble wreck, a proceeding impossible alike to Frederick and to Carlyle, is alone a rebuttal of the charge; and Walpole's struggles for the better administration and direction of things in England and in the Colonies, above set forth, are enough to put to shame the reckless detractor. Even he, grimacing and attitudinizing over his mishandled task of judging justly and recording truly, veers confusedly between a jeer at Walpole's policy of keeping out of trouble and a confession that it is "not so bad a rule, indeed it is the better part of an extremely good one." Whereafter he sets himself to the task of forcing the historic data into such shape as will best comport with his idolatrous end.

Now that Carlyle's historical gospel has found its culmination and doom in the World War, of the German



causation of which his *Life of Friedrich* is an anticipatory justification, it is unnecessary to argue the case. It is indeed the most tragic aspect of man's universe that prophets who, as he, have supposed themselves to be builders-up of order are in effect workers of chaos. But it is none the less needful to give the verdict firmly. We owe no thanks to Frederick or to his prophet for the fact that the civilization of modern Europe has not been wrecked as that of ancient Europe was by Rome. And the English statesman who was thwarted by his enemies at home when he might have either prevented or repelled Frederick's aggression, the lead to so many a wasteful war, is in contrast entitled to the benison of all who have ever realized how ruinous war can be.

In a word, it is not always the picturesque figures in politics who build most soundly or see most clearly. Walpole is certainly not picturesque, as contrasted with his rival Bolingbroke, or the chief figure in the next generation of English politics. But if we weigh in critical scales all the leading men of Walpole's age we shall find few who better stand the tests by which we discriminate masculine understanding, practical sagacity, and worthy largeness of temper. Bolingbroke certainly does not. That Walpole held the trust of two successive kings during thirty years is perhaps not a decisive witness to his wisdom, though it says something for his honesty. But there is some special weight in the fact that he held during the same period, to the day of her death, the trust of Queen Caroline, the one person who by sheer strength of character gives a touch of nobility to the life of the House of Hanover during a hundred years. Even Carlyle pronounces her to be "Wisdom's self in a manner."<sup>1</sup> There is record that she once thought Walpole less assiduous in the king's interest than he ought to have been: and that he allowed her to think he deserved a small rebuke.<sup>2</sup> That was their only jar.

<sup>1</sup> *Friedrich*, ii. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, *Caroline the Illustrious*, p. 592.



And the fact that she prized Walpole as she prized Butler is something of a certificate for both men.

Even Pulteney set against his many aspersions, public and private, the avowal that it was hardly possible to ruffle Walpole's temper, and that he speedily forgot the most violent invectives against him.<sup>1</sup> But weightiest of all is the testimony of Speaker Onslow, who, admiring Windham as the greatest parliamentary character of his time, had no partisan prejudice in Walpole's favour: "He was a wise and able minister, and the best man, *from the goodness of his heart*, to live with and live under, of any great man I ever knew."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Morley, *Walpole*, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Peel, whose whole criticism (in Stanhope's *Miscellanies*, pp. 67-80) is well worth study.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE SOCIAL EVOLUTION

WHEN Walpole fell from power, more than fifty years had passed since the Revolution of 1688. What, in that interval, had been the progress of the nation, as we commonly understand the words? In the evolution of two hundred years, every day has been almost indistinguishable from the preceding one in respect of the main aspects of life; yet between the extremes there has been wrought a difference as between two civilizations. In fifty years, a considerable part of the transition must have been made. The problem is, to understand the factors, the causes, that mainly count; and to realize what are the main elements of gain.

#### § 1. Aspects of Social Life.

Could a sleeper, as in a modern romance, have lain down in 1690 and awaked in 1740, he would have seen much to surprise, but nothing to stupefy him. Costume had not very extensively changed; men still carried swords, and did their long journeys on horseback, though carriages had multiplied. The pillory was still a mode of punishment; and though General Oglethorpe had secured a humane reform in gaol methods (1730),<sup>1</sup> crime and drunkenness were still lamentably prevalent. Turnpikes had been introduced soon after the Restoration, but had spread very slowly, and "the great roads of England remained almost in their ancient condition even as late as 1754."<sup>2</sup> Wigs

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, ii. 128 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Chalmers, *Estimate of the Comparative Strength of Great Britain*, ed. 1794, pp. 124-5, citing *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1752-54. Cp.



were still generally worn by the upper and middle classes, though much reduced in size for ordinary use. London the *revenant* would find greatly increased in size ; but that was an old story. The attempts to restrain the city's growth had been given up after 1674 ;<sup>1</sup> and on the west and north it had continuously extended, notably in respect of "fashionable" streets. The "vast" increase on the west necessitated a new water supply ; and in 1722 the Chelsea Water Company started one, with a reservoir in Hyde Park.<sup>2</sup> Paving and sewerage had changed little. The Fleet Ditch, the main sewer of the city, cannot have been worse under the Stuarts than it is pictured by Swift and Pope : and the first Paving Act for Westminster was passed only in 1762.<sup>3</sup> With septennial Parliaments, members resided much more in London than of old ; and the resort of country gentry to the town had correlatively increased. Beyond question, the waking sleeper would see a much wealthier London than that of 1690. The class-wealth had come, in the main, by the channels of commerce and manufacture ; in a less but significant degree by that of profiteering and jobbing on war loans in the days of Anne ; but agriculture also must have counted for something.

## § 2. Agriculture.

On this head, modern authorities are apparently in conflict with the evidence. Dr. H. D. Traill asserts that "we have to wait till the century has run more than half its course before trade and agriculture take their forward stride."<sup>4</sup> This editorial generalization is contradicted on both heads by the specialists who go into the details in

Defoe, *Tour*, 2nd ed. 1738 ; i. 196, 317 ; ii. 366 *sq.* Defoe speaks hopefully of the new turnpikes and bridges, but shows that they were mostly near London.

<sup>1</sup> Craik, *History of Commerce*, ii. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson's *Commerce*, ed. 1787, iii. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Aubrey, *Rise and Growth of the English Nation*, ed. 1897, iii. 130.

<sup>4</sup> *Social England*, illustrated ed., v. 2.



the same volume. Mr. Prothero points to Jethro Tull (1680–1740) as the foremost pioneer in agriculture, in respect of his *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry* (1733);<sup>1</sup> and ascribes great practical advances to Lord Townshend, who devoted himself to agricultural reform in Norfolk after abandoning politics in 1730.<sup>2</sup> But, close by, Walpole's father had been a noted high farmer in the previous century; and it is probable that agriculture was advancing at various centres all along.<sup>3</sup> In 1677, Andrew Yarranton claims to have doubled the value of the land in "great parts of Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire," by introducing clover culture for worn-out ryelands.<sup>4</sup> It took over a century to put down the practice of keeping half the land fallow; but other advances were made; and Townshend's introduction of turnips was a step in advance, though cattle-feeding was very slowly learned.<sup>5</sup> In the second edition of Defoe's *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* it is told, concerning the region of Salisbury Plain—

how a great part of these downs comes, by a new method of husbandry, to be not only made arable, which they never were in former days, but to bear excellent wheat, and great crops too, though otherwise poor barren land, and never known to our ancestors to be capable of any such thing; nay, they would perhaps have laughed at any one that would have gone about to plough up the wild downs and hills where the sheep were wont to go. But experience has made the present age wiser, and more skilful in husbandry; for by

<sup>1</sup> The system ruined its originator, who relied on pulverization without proper regard to manuring; but his book was translated into French and annotated by Duhamel, and was made much account of by Diderot in the *Encyclopédie*. Cobbett reissued Tull's works, with corrective comments, in 1822. (Aubrey, iii. 142.)

<sup>2</sup> Vol. cited, pp. 140–5.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution*, 1884, p. 38 sq.

<sup>4</sup> *England's Improvement by Sea and Land*, 1677–81, Pt. I, p. 178.

<sup>5</sup> "In 1710, Davenant estimated the average net weight of the cattle sold in Smithfield at 370 pounds. A century later it was 800." (Aubrey, iii. 143.)



only folding the sheep upon the ploughed lands, those lands, which otherwise are barren, and where the plough goes within three or four inches of the solid rock of chalk, are made fruitful, and bear very good wheat, as well as rye and barley.<sup>1</sup>

For Defoe, England in 1725 (he had in view, however, mainly the south) was "a plain and pleasant country, a rich, fertile soil, cultivated and enclosed to the utmost perfection of husbandry." It was calculated at Dorchester that 600,000 sheep fed in the plain country between Winchester and Weymouth: by another calculation, that number fed within a six miles radius of Dorchester.<sup>2</sup> In Norfolk, again, 40,000 cattle from the Scottish Highlands were fattened every year. A wasteful plenty, with the usual counterpart of squalid and largely drunken poverty, marked rural and town life. At Farnham Fair, the greatest corn-market outside of London, eleven hundred teams of horse could be counted on a market-day, bringing some 44,000 bushels of wheat.<sup>3</sup> Evidently there was a continual increase of population, stimulating production. The increase of numbers, however, seems to have been signally checked about this period by drunkenness in the towns. The vice had been gaining ground for a century and a half. Camden noted it in 1581, in respect of beer-drinking, as an importation from the Netherlands; and Shakespeare in drama, and Nashe in prose, bear him out; even under the Commonwealth, when it might have been supposed to be checked, it is lamented as a national sin; and under the first two Georges gin became the national curse.<sup>4</sup> About a third part of the whole arable land was devoted in William's reign to barley, for the purpose of beer-brewing;<sup>5</sup> and the quantity brewed was about 12,000,000 barrels, for a population of about five and a half millions. On this side there was no change for the better.

<sup>1</sup> *Tour*, ed. 1738, i. 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* pp. 283, 306. Cp. ii. 39.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* i. 214.

<sup>4</sup> Lecky, *History*, ii. 97 sq.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* p. 100, citing Gregory King's *State of England*.



## § 3. Drink.

While among the upper classes, from the Restoration onwards, excessive wine-drinking grew more and more common, the poor in the towns remained mainly beer-drinkers until Walpole's time. But when, in 1689, the Government of William prohibited the importation of all foreign spirits by way of penalizing France, and threw open the business of spirit-distilling under a license, the upper classes began to increase their consumption of strong drink ; and after a generation, when gin became cheap, the populace joined them. The British output is reckoned to have been only 527,000 gallons in 1684 ; and two million gallons in 1714 ; but in 1724 it had risen to 3,600,000 ; in 1735 to 5,394,000 gallons ; and in 1742 to 7,162,000. The maximum consumption seems to have been reached in 1751, when, as before noted, it was 11,000,000 gallons ; and the number of gin-shops within the area of the London Bills of Mortality was 17,000.<sup>1</sup>

When the gin-shops made the proffer : " Drunk for 1d., dead drunk for 2d., and straw for nothing," the lower levels of life were as the lowest circle of hell. The bulk of the poverty, the murders, and the robberies were notoriously traceable to this cause. The death-rate was enormous ; <sup>2</sup> and in London it heavily exceeded the birth-rate.<sup>3</sup> Still, London was ever increasing ; the villages in the home counties were rapidly expanding, as places of

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, ii. 103 ; A. L. Smith in *Social England*, ed. cited, v. 181.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> King (cited by Davenant, *Essay on the Balance of Trade*, 1699, p. 20) reckoned that in his time the London deaths annually exceeded the births by 2,000. In 1733 the Bills of Mortality show 17,000 christenings to 29,000 deaths ; in 1741 the figures are 13,751 and 27,483 ; and such proportions are often closely approached. Only in the last two decades do the christenings and deaths approximate. In 1798 and 1799 they are almost exactly equal : 18,047, 18,062 ; 18,970, 18,184. Evidently, however, the statistical area had been altered.



country residence for London traders; and the great market thus established moved husbandry in a dozen counties.

#### § 4. Land Policy.

But State policy had also been at work, and this is doubtless the explanation of the development of agriculture described by Defoe in the region of Salisbury Plain, though that was certainly not the real object of the bounties on the exportation of corn. As early as 1660, the old prohibition of the export of corn had been modified in the interest of the landowners, permission being given to export when the price of wheat was not above 40s. per quarter; in 1663 the price limit was raised to 53s. 4d. The arrangement, though effected for the sake of the landed interest, was doubtless beneficial to agriculture; the old declamations against such export being but the rhetoric of economic ignorance. But in 1688-9, when William was bargaining to impose a regular land tax, the landowners obtained a new *quid pro quo*. Of old the land tax by "subsidy" had been a scandal, the method of local self-assessment having worked out in a continuous decline of the yield.<sup>1</sup> Under the Commonwealth, Roundhead Radicalism assessed the sums to be paid by the counties, and left them to levy the rate. The sound simplicity of that method was yearned for after the Restoration, as against the fatally infertile system of "subsidies"; and in 1660 the Commonwealth plan of assessment was actually applied for six months, yielding £70,000 per month.<sup>2</sup> But this was not continued,<sup>3</sup> the loyal gentry being naturally hostile; and in 1670 the King had

<sup>1</sup> "I do not understand this," wrote Mr. Spedding once, with startling *naïveté*, of the phenomena under Elizabeth and James. The simple explanation is the self-assessment of districts.

<sup>2</sup> Sinclair, *History of the Public Revenue*, 3rd ed. 1803, i. 304-11.

<sup>3</sup> Taxation under Charles II is hard to trace, the Acts taxing land not being among the printed statutes (Sinclair, i. 304); and Macaulay's account is accordingly very vague (ch. xix—ii. 392-3).



to be granted power to sell the fee-farm rents, "the principal part that still remained of the royal domains."

At the Revolution, with civil war on hand, new methods were indispensable ; and to secure assent to a regular land tax, on a new valuation, which was completed in 1692, a bounty on the exportation of corn up to a 48s. limit was enacted for the behoof of the landowners. It was a simple device to raise the falling price of corn to the level at which it had generally stood in the previous reigns.<sup>1</sup> In the bad years 1693-9, farmers and landowners would thrive without the bounty, though even then they exported corn ; and when good seasons returned it duly operated to deprive the consumer of the benefit of plenty. It was of course argued that the "encouragement to agriculture" tended to lower price ; but in point of fact the Dutch and French in times of dearth were enabled to buy English corn cheaper than the English did ;<sup>2</sup> nay, to resell it dear after buying.<sup>3</sup> And all the while, as an early free-trader puts it, "foreigners never buy [our] provisions till they want them, and then they must have them, whether we give bounties or no." At the same time, of course, importation of food was prohibited ; so that the English consumer never got the due benefit of plenty at home or of plenty abroad. Still, the agricultural class had the benefit of increased employment ; and in far Northumberland we find the plough set to work on what had been waste land from time immemorial.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that, during the best part of a century through which the bounty system lasted, corn prices were in general lower than in the previous century, was naturally

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Bk. I, ch. xi, pt. iii. McCulloch's 1-vol. ed., p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Essay on the Causes of the Decline of Foreign Trade* (by William Richardson), ed. 1756, pp. 65-6.

<sup>3</sup> Davenant, *Essay on the Balance of Trade*, 1699, p. 84.

<sup>4</sup> As to new cultivation there between 1698 and 1702, see *Archæologia Æliana* (Transactions of Society of Antiquaries of Northumberland), 2nd Series, vol. xxi. (for 1903), pp. 190-4.



claimed as proving that the bounty system made food cheap; but the fact that in France also, after the period of misery in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, prices fell, points either to Smith's inference that the low prices were a result of the relative scarcity of silver or to a general improvement in agriculture; and that could have been maintained in England by simple freedom of exportation without bounties. On the whole, the economic lot of the people was relatively good, by reason of the high death-rate; and Hallam and Malthus agreed in the view that labourers' wages had never before commanded so large a share of subsistence as in the reign of George II.<sup>1</sup> That is not a slight tribute to the rule of Walpole, considering the countervailing forces.

### § 5. Trade and Smuggling.

Trade, in particular, was still hampered at almost every turn by fiscal hindrances, Walpole's merit being that he aimed at removing or lowering rather than raising imposts, let in many raw materials free, and stopped taxes on exports. On the other hand, the bounty on corn exports led extra capital into that trade, and the bounty was so much national waste. In 1724 the export of wheat had risen to 245,865 quarters (the quarter of that period was eight—in some districts nine—bushels); in 1733 it was 427,199; in 1738, 580,000, in addition to 198,000 quarters of malt, 70,000 of barley, and 36,000 of rye, for which the total bounties paid were £184,000. In 1750, the wheat export was 947,602 quarters, the highest figure ever reached.<sup>2</sup> With such bulky exports, and all manner of imposts laid on imports, the return trade was largely one of smuggling, the most demoralizing of all industries, multiplying bankruptcy and crime to an extent now hardly

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Constitutional History*, iii. 302. Cp. Lecky, i. 390, and refs.

<sup>2</sup> Craik, *History of Commerce*, ii. 146; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1742, p. 140.



to be realized.<sup>1</sup> We have seen how Walpole was thwarted in a policy which would have gone far to extirpate the evil, fully realized by him. The evidence seems to show that at all periods a full half, and at some more than a half, of the import from the Continent, and much of that from overseas—tea, coffee, brandy, silk, laces, wines, drugs, tobacco—and a large amount of exportation of wool, a thing then prohibited, was by way of contraband. This was part of the price paid for Protection in general and for the illusory Navigation Laws, which had been imposed to sustain British shipping, and hampered its growth for over a hundred and fifty years.<sup>2</sup> Smuggling in turn entailed a costly and wasteful preventive service, which added to the “loss” caused by smuggling to the revenue.

The constant damage thus inflicted on regular trade is presumably part of the cause of the impression that that was actually declining; though the taxes, the customs, and the subsisting monopolies were especially blamed. In 1744 appeared the *Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*.<sup>3</sup> The author's general grounds for alleging absolute decline are clearly fallacious; and trade, apart from the effects of the war, had actually been increasing. But he rightly blames the customs, the prohibitions, and the monopolies. An English shipment of £2,000 of wine from Oporto, by his account, paid the same amount in duties<sup>4</sup>—a singular fulfilment of the old policy of encouraging Portuguese wines as against French. On the other hand, vast quantities of English wool were smuggled into France and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> “’Tis felony in England to export wool; and yet they who furnish all

<sup>1</sup> See the author's *Trade and Tariffs*, pp. 61-5; or, for a full and interesting record, E. Keble Chatterton's *King's Cutters and Smugglers, 1700-1855*, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> *Trade and Tariffs*, pp. 30, 127. Cp. the author's pamphlet, *Shipping After the War* (Cobden Club), 1916.

<sup>3</sup> Ascribed by Smith to Sir Matthew Decker; by Chalmers and others (probably correctly) to William Richardson.

<sup>4</sup> Work cited, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* pp. 29, 31.



the world with wool have least of the manufacturing of it among themselves.”<sup>1</sup> The monopolies of the East India, Turkey, and South Sea Companies, in this writer’s opinion, directly caused the evil, all woollens exported by them having to bear the heavy cost of the land carriage to London, to which port their charters confined their exportation.<sup>2</sup>

The summing-up of eighteenth-century trade, on this side, is that whereas at every port, despite Walpole’s freeing of many imports, there was a custom-house machinery for making importation difficult and costly, relief was found by resort to a system of still greater difficulty but much less cost to those concerned; their gain in turn being equated by the national outlay on the naval police and coastguard system set up to prevent it. Thus all expansion of trade took place under a dead weight of hindrances imposed by the selfish stupidity of manufacturers and monopolists on the one side and the landed interest on the other, both playing into the hands of a fisc that sought revenue first and last, and naturally took the line of least resistance.

Walpole, with his clear vision of social forces, could not dream of all-round free trade; but he knew the nature of the case, and it is his great record that he found the British rate-book the heaviest and left it the lightest in Europe. The machinery of hindrance remained in action; and its power of pressure, even after his great reform, may be gathered from the *Complete View of the British Customs* published by Henry Crouch in 1727; but the friction was relatively less than that set up in most other countries. In France and Germany, in particular, imposts were laid on trade at the frontiers of all provinces; and from this burden England was free. Other lands, then,

<sup>1</sup> Work cited, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 48. This argument overlooks the further factor of the coarseness of the English woollens. By excluding foreign wool, the legislature prevented the manufacturers from mixing their wools—the thing mainly needed to improve their fabrics.



being thus also fettered by bad fiscal systems, with the partial exception of Holland, trade here continued to expand. Dutch commerce was still great in the Walpole period, though beginning to be sorely affected by the monopolies set up as regards Dutch East Indian possessions, and by the expansion of British manufactures, founded on natural resources much greater than those of Holland, and on a far more expansive colonial trade. In 1728, when the trade of Jamaica alone was estimated to employ 300 sail and over 6,000 seamen, the number of British ships arriving in London from overseas was 1,839; of foreign ships, 213; and of coasters, 6,837, making a total of 8,889;<sup>1</sup> whereas the arrivals at Amsterdam in 1734 were only 1,721, of which about 400 seem to have been coasters.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing could quite suppress the growth of that which was not in the hands of monopolists;<sup>3</sup> and a shipping which was in part constructed by bountied imports of colonial timber continued slowly to expand. From the customs registers, of which the average of errors may be assumed to have remained the same over a long period, we see a fairly steady but slow growth after the period of war depression which was ended by the Peace of Ryswick. In the three years 1699–1701 the total outward clearances averaged 337,328 tons, of which 43,625 were foreign, with cargoes valued at £6,709,881. For the years 1713–15, the figures are 448,004; 26,573; and £7,696,573.<sup>4</sup> For the years 1726–8 they are 456,483; 23,651; £7,891,739. A considerably quicker movement is to be seen in the reign of George II under the *Pax Walpoleana*; the average

<sup>1</sup> Anderson's *Origin of Commerce*, 1787, iii. 150, 152.

<sup>2</sup> *Id. sub ann.* 1734. The arrivals at Cadiz in this year were 1,004.

<sup>3</sup> "Only the American trade is managed by merchants not incorporated" (Miege, *New State of England*, 1703, p. 245). But the American trade as a whole was a British monopoly, and Smith was largely right in his contention (B. IV, ch. vii.) that this prevented the growth of British manufactures.

<sup>4</sup> Chalmers' *Estimate*, ed. 1794, p. 90.



figures for the three years 1736-8 being 503,568 ; 26,627 ; £9,993,232. The crews who manned the 477,000 tons of English shipping at the latter date are probably underestimated at 26,616 men. The long and fruitless war begun with Spain against Walpole's will duly depleted the mercantile marine,<sup>1</sup> the outward clearances in 1747 being : British, 394,571 tons ; foreign, 101,671, with cargo values of £9,775,340. Only in 1748 is there a marked recovery ; and in that year the outward British clearances are almost exactly the same as those of 1738.

### § 6. Incomes.

Walpole had thus been trebly justified. On the whole, there must have been a notable increase of incomes during his twenty years of rule. The gambling in South Sea Stock had shown already a relative abundance of spare funds ; and in the twenty years following, wealth must have increased in town and country. As against the summary of Dr. Traill, Green had pronounced that in the period 1712-42 " progress became material rather than political, but the material progress of the country was such as England had never seen before."<sup>2</sup> About the end of the previous century (1696) Gregory King had estimated that there were in the kingdom one hundred and sixty families of the nobility with households of forty and annual incomes averaging £3,200 ; twenty spiritual lords with households of twenty and incomes averaging £1,300 ; eight hundred families of baronets, with households of sixteen and average incomes of £880 ; six hundred knights, averaging £650 ; three thousand esquires, averaging £450 ; twelve thousand gentlemen,

<sup>1</sup> It is recorded that in the two years from July, 1739, to July, 1741, the Spanish captured 154 British ships, while the British took only 127 ships from Spain. An attempt was made to show that on a balance the total Spanish loss from the war was £1,617,000, and the British only £612,000. (H. Boyle's *Chronology of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, 1826, p. 99.)

<sup>2</sup> *Short History*, ed. 1881, p. 796.



averaging £240; two thousand eminent merchants and traders by sea with incomes averaging £400; and eight thousand lesser merchants and traders averaging £198. The ten thousand "persons in the law", he estimated to earn on the average only £154; two thousand "eminent clergymen" only £72; and eight thousand lesser clergymen only £50; while he put forty thousand "freeholders of the better sort" at an average of £91; one hundred and twenty thousand freeholders of the lesser sort at £55; and one hundred and fifty thousand farmers at £42 10s.

It is all guess-work, and apparently a general underestimate of incomes; but assuming it to be roughly something like the truth, we note on the one hand the great preponderance of agriculture and on the other the general smallness of incomes as compared with those of a century later. The figures, indeed, are untrustworthy, for we have it on record that the estate of Walpole's father was worth £2,000 a year in 1700; and many peers must have had much more. On the other hand, King reckons the "artizans and handicrafts" to account for only sixty thousand families, with an average of £38; shopkeepers and tradesmen he puts at fifty thousand, with incomes of £45; common seamen at fifty thousand, with wages of £20; labouring people and out-servants at three hundred and sixty-four thousand families, with £15 per family; adding four hundred thousand families of "cottagers and paupers," with incomes of from £6 to £10.<sup>1</sup> The whole is adjusted to an estimate, now held to be over the mark, of a population of 5,500,000.<sup>2</sup> The latterly current estimate runs about 5,000,000<sup>3</sup>—which makes King at this point fairly accurate. If he is at all similarly right as to incomes in general, there can be no question that in the next half

<sup>1</sup> Table in Davenant's *Essay on . . . the Balance of Trade*, 1699, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution*, 1884, p. 33, and refs.



century they greatly increased. Farmers prospered on the whole ; and well-to-do and wealthy traders must have considerably multiplied, to the extent of making hundreds of merchants with over a thousand pounds a year. In 1730, we read, four English China ships arrived with 1,707,300 lb. of tea, on which the duty, at 4s. per lb., amounted to £341,000. In the same year, four ships of the English Turkey Company carried out a million pieces of broadcloth to the Levant.<sup>1</sup> Here was a kind and quantity of trade undreamt of under the Stuarts.

### § 7. Manufactures.

Manufactures probably did not advance proportionately, though there, too, there was progress. Toynbee generalizes that from 1700 to 1750 "England, though rapidly increasing in wealth owing to her extended commercial relations, yet retained her old industrial organization," the transition to the modern industrial system having only begun after 1750.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, he pictures the Leeds of 1760 in terms of the description of Defoe ; and yet again he notes how between 1700 and 1750 there is a marked increase in density of population in Lancashire and the West Riding, the seats of the cotton and coarse woollen manufactures ; in Staffordshire and Warwickshire, with their potteries and hardware ; and in Durham and Northumberland, with their collieries.<sup>3</sup> Manchester, in fact, was growing step for step with Liverpool.<sup>4</sup>

Thus far, the chief Lancashire industry is the woollen manufacture, the so-called "cottons" mentioned by Defoe as anciently manufactured at Manchester being really woollens.<sup>5</sup> The total cotton manufacture, syste-

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, *sub ann.* 1730.    <sup>2</sup> As cited, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Defoe, *Tour*, as cited, iii. 173-4.

<sup>5</sup> Baines, *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, 1835, pp. 107-8, *note*. Schulze-Gävernitz in *Der Grossbetrieb*, 1892, p. 26, overlooks this correction, taking the "cottons" mentioned by Defoe in 1727, and by Roberts in 1641, to be really cottons. His view is supported by the high authority of Professor Chapman (*The Lancashire*



matically repressed as it was in the interest of the woollen trade, seems to have remained stationary from the Revolution to 1740, the raw imports having been 1,976,359 lb. in 1697; 1,972,805 in 1720; 1,545,472 in 1730; and 1,645,031 in 1741—under war conditions. Not till 1751 did it reach the figure of 2,976,616 lb., which in 1764 rises to 3,870,392.<sup>1</sup> Neither had the exports of cotton goods increased in the same period, the export values in 1701 being £23,253; in 1720 (after a lower fall in 1710), £16,200; in 1730, £13,524; and in 1741, £20,709. In 1751 they had only reached £46,000; and in 1764 £200,000. This slow advance in an industry whose products specially appealed to the mass of the people was the result of

*Cotton Industry*, Manchester, 1904, p. 2), who, however, makes the remark that by "cotton" Defoe meant "cotton proper, and not those coarse woollens which" had long borne that name, *without mentioning or meeting Baines's express denial*, though he had the passage before him, and actually cites Defoe from Baines. In his article on "Cotton Manufacture" in the *Encyc. Brit.*, Professor Chapman goes more fully into the matter, citing the notable petition lately discovered by Mr. W. H. Price, datable about 1621, which proves the existence of a real manufacture in Lancashire of cotton "fustians" at that time, employing thousands of poor persons. Still, he does not meet the difficulty as to Defoe's statement. It is clear that Defoe understood the "Manchester cottons" of Camden's and earlier times to be real cottons, whereas they admittedly were not. Further, whereas Defoe declared the "grand manufacture which has so much raised this town" to be "that of cotton in all its varieties," Professor Chapman admits that "it was not until some fifty years later that the ousting of the woollen industry from what is now peculiarly the cotton district became unmistakable." Then cotton manufacture *cannot* have been the "grand industry" of Manchester when Defoe made his tour. It is noteworthy that in the posthumous edition of 1738 the sentence above cited from the first edition has disappeared, though the remaining passages continue to represent the "Manchester cottons" as having been from the first actual cottons, which we know they were not. The presumption remains that Baines was right, and Defoe, in the main, wrong. But that there was some use of cotton in Lancashire in his period will appear below.

<sup>1</sup> Baines, p. 109.



systematic repression. The landed class, being the wool producers, joined hands with the wool dealers and manufacturers to prevent the use of cotton.<sup>1</sup> As after the Restoration (1666) it was enacted that all shrouds must be made of wool, under a £5 penalty, so in 1700 an Act was passed providing that silks and calicoes imported from the East should be compulsorily re-exported ; in 1701 the law was applied to French goods ; and in 1721, as we have seen, a law was passed prohibiting the use of calicoes, whether printed at home or abroad.<sup>2</sup> The later export figures are thus explained.

Already Lancashire had begun to specialize in a cotton manufacture in which linen thread was used for the warps ; and in 1720 an "incredibly large" trade was done at Manchester in "fustians, girth-web, tukings, tapes, etc., which are dispersed all over the kingdom, and to foreign parts."<sup>3</sup> Cotton manufacture, which towards the end of the previous century had been established in London, seems already to have gravitated northwards, the total import having undergone no increase. In 1739, according to a record which ill consists with the official figures of export and accordingly tells of fresh smuggling, "the manufacture of cotton, mixed and plain, is arrived at so great perfection within these twenty years that we not only make enough for our own consumption but supply our colonies and many of the nations of Europe" ; and Manchester in that period had grown by two thousand houses, laying out latterly above £30,000 a year on new buildings.<sup>4</sup>

But the trade and manufacture still went on in the old fashion, spinners and weavers working individually, the weaver going round the spinners to buy his thread and selling his web to the merchant. The "factory,"

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *Trade and Tariffs*, p. 42 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, iii. 127-8 ; Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, ii. (1903) 517.

<sup>3</sup> Stukely, cited by Baines, p. 107.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* p. 108.



which had been adumbrated in London workshops in the Tudor period,<sup>1</sup> had not yet appeared in its modern sense of a collection of machines. "Up to the year 1760, the machines used in the cotton manufacture in England were nearly as simple as those of India."<sup>2</sup> Kay's invention of the fly-shuttle, his son's of the drop-box, and Wyatt's of spinning by rollers, belong to 1738; but men were still primitively slow to profit by inventions, the workmen so fiercely opposing them that John Kay, in danger of his life, went to France;<sup>3</sup> and not till about 1760 was machinery a notable factor in industry.

### § 8. Capital and Labour.

"Capitalism," however, had long before revealed itself in English industry; and without it there would have been little expansion. That is to say, the efforts of moneyed men to make profits as middlemen or merchants in both raw materials and finished goods had increasingly affected the main productive industries, causing and facilitating movement of wares, in the teeth of the hostility alike of agriculturists, trade guilds, and workers. Under Elizabeth, when "patents" of monopoly were the eagerly sought means to wealth, "the planting of new industries was a capitalist undertaking, organized by moneyed men, who were prepared to wait some years for the full return of their outlay";<sup>4</sup> and in the eighteenth century moneyed men largely controlled the wool trade, buying the wool over the head of the weaver, and selling it to him at a profit or paying him by the piece for his work.<sup>5</sup> Yet here, too, "selfish, huckstering trade" was the great force of material progress. But for capitalism, machinery could never have won its ground against the hand-workers, who detested it, and sought to destroy it. They, on their

<sup>1</sup> This aspect of industrial evolution appears to have been very little investigated. Cunningham slightly glances at it.

<sup>2</sup> Baines, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* pp. 116-21.

<sup>4</sup> Cunningham, as cited, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* pp. 505-12.



part, "organized" anew, as trade unions, in *their* own interest,<sup>1</sup> organization being thus developed by labour as by capital. But in the new industries, where there were no monopolies, the work of capital was done by enterprising individuals.<sup>2</sup> Naturally they looked solely to themselves, leaving the workers to do likewise.

In that age there was yet another attitude which made the normal friction between capital and labour particularly harsh. There was a prevailing conviction that the worker was naturally lazy; that the British worker in particular would never work longer or harder than was necessary to keep him alive; and that consequently cheap food and clothing and high wages were alike injurious to industry. It is put by Sir Josiah Child and Petty in the seventeenth century;<sup>3</sup> and by Mandeville and Defoe in the eighteenth. Mandeville wants an abundance of poor to do the dirty work, and insists on the folly of educating their children in charity schools.<sup>4</sup> As to their unwillingness to work he is emphatic and explicit. "Everybody knows that there is a vast number" of handicraftsmen "who, if by four days' labour in a week they can maintain themselves, will hardly be persuaded to work the fifth"; and that there are thousands who will "though they can hardly subsist, put themselves to fifty inconveniences, disoblige their masters, pinch their bellies, and run in debt to take holidays."<sup>5</sup> And Joshua Gee, writing in 1729, quotes the "clothiers and other manufacturers" as reporting that when corn is cheap they have great difficulty in getting their work done, whereas when it is dear the hands work diligently, even to the extent of providing themselves better with clothes.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* the journeymen tailors in 1720. (Cunningham, p. 513.)

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* pp. 517-18.

<sup>3</sup> *Evolution of States*, p. 467.

<sup>4</sup> *Fable of the Bees*, Pt. II, Dialogue vi, near end; Pt. I, Remark Q (on l. 307). Cp. Defoe, *Giving Alms no Charity*.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* last cit.

<sup>6</sup> *Trade and Navigation of Great Britain Considered*, 6th ed., p. 38.



The refutation of all this is perhaps not quite so simple as the philanthropist would like to think. It raises for us the issues put later by Malthus and Buckle as to the effects of cheap food in making a people multiply overabundantly, though that problem had not clearly obtruded itself on any of the early economists. Sir William Temple, having his eye on Holland, had argued that trade went best among "a great multitude of people crowded into a small compass of land, whereby all things necessary to life became dear," the richer being thus forced to parsimony and the poorer to labour<sup>1</sup>—a thesis conveying the puzzling conception of a great trade, which suggests great wealth, coinciding with general hardship. Child, who is all for dear food to make the poor work, complicates the matter by desiring for them high wages, on the grounds that Dutch trade flourishes with wages higher than the English; that high wages always go with national riches, and low wages with poverty; that population enriches any country; and that if we cut down our wages we shall drive our people to Holland, where too many of our seamen and wool-workers have gone already.<sup>2</sup> Thus Child at one time argues that the poor must not have cheap food, and at another that they should have high wages, which would tend to set up the same condition.

The probable explanation is that the dear food was good for the landed class, with their bounty on corn export, and their duty on imports; while the high wages argument was directed against an exponent of it who was a defender of high interest on money, which the knight deplored.<sup>3</sup> Beyond this kind of dialectic the only advance was that made by those who saw, as Child did, that a high power of consumption among the mass of the people is good for industry; and this view is put as early as 1734 by Jacob

<sup>1</sup> *Observations upon the United Provinces*, 1672, ch. vi.

<sup>2</sup> *New Discourse*, pref. to 2nd and later edd. Ed. 1693, pp. x-xi.

<sup>3</sup> The Preface, it should be noted, is written over twenty years after the first issue of the treatise.



Vanderlint in his *Money Answers All Things*.<sup>1</sup> But the difficulty about the unwillingness of many of the poor to work is not met; and it occurred to no economist of that age to suggest that by education the people might be led to raise their standards of comfort and grow more industrious accordingly. Some, indeed, had seen that the Poor Law system, under which each parish had to maintain its poor, so that unemployed people who moved about were driven back to their place of "settlement," needed radical remodelling.

### § 9. Poverty and Poor Laws.

The lamentable history of the law of settlement was sketched by Adam Smith<sup>2</sup> in a later generation, when the evil was still uncured. It represented the failure of successive ages to master the double problem of blind increase of population and chronic change in the demand for labour, from the Age of Elizabeth onwards. The Elizabethan Poor Law, which was no mere sequel of the abolition of the monasteries but one of the typical attempts then being made in Europe to handle the problem of poverty,<sup>3</sup> stipulated for the maintenance of the poor, but made no methodical provision for their employment, being indeed much more concerned to keep wages down than to raise them.<sup>4</sup> When trade flourished as a result of the immigration of industrious Flemings expatriated by Spanish persecution, matters went well; when population responded to the new stimulus, the Nemesis of

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Schulze-Gävernitz, *Der Grossbetrieb*, p. 6—a good survey of the dispute.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. I, ch. x, pt. ii, near end. Cp. A. L. Smith, in *Social England*, as cited, v. 176 sq.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Sir W. J. Ashley, *Introduction to English Economic History*, Pt. II, p. 350.

<sup>4</sup> To make out the Elizabethan policy, as does Mr. Garnier (*Annals of the British Peasantry*, 1895, p. 133), an expression of the personal sagacity of Elizabeth, is to misread the historical facts. It was inevitably parliamentary and aristocratic policy.



unemployment came into play. And the dilemma was always recurring. The legislation of the Restoration period was an attempt at once to enforce the law of settlement, under which each parish was responsible for its own poor, and to prevent the paralysis of industry that that system involved when employment failed in one district and beckoned in another. *Laissez-faire* was barred by humanity, for poverty was ubiquitous and must be socially faced; and to employ labour systematically, a problem not solved in the nineteenth century, was necessarily beyond the resources of the seventeenth and eighteenth.

Widespread hardship was set up by the obligation laid on poor parishes to maintain their own poor. The poorer the parish the higher the rates, while the wealthy quarters of the towns and many wealthy rural parishes bore none of the burden of the nation's poverty. That evil, which has not been rightly remedied even at the present day, came under legislative notice in 1697, when an Act was passed forming the different parishes of the City of Bristol into one union, with a workhouse. This working well, the principle was soon applied in a number of other towns; and in 1723 the Union principle was given a still more general application. Reforms of this kind were among the firstfruits of Walpole's tenure of power.

It was in 1722 that Parliament passed the Act to establish workhouses where, and where alone, poor relief should be given under a work test. It was on the whole a statesmanlike measure, proceeding on the fact that poverty and charity developed in a vicious circle, and that the only way out was to make poor relief conditional on some kind of industry. It was in fact an early application of the principle forced anew on the nation in 1834, when the system of outdoor relief was again found to be a spreading social cancer, demoralizing the poor and undermining all other classes. That it failed to establish itself in Walpole's day was due to the fact that gross



population—the total birth-rate—was out of all proportion to the expansion of the means of employment then on foot.

A notable measure of success was indeed at first attained. An *Account of Several Workhouses* published in 1725 and 1732, tells that about sixty workhouses were in operation on the new plan.<sup>1</sup> “Lord Mansfield, in 1782, said they had cut down the poor-rate by one-half; and the returns are still extant which prove that annual expenses went down from £566 to £275 at St. Albans, from £945 to £574 at Chatham, from £170 to £100 at Harborough, and so on. Not merely could a man be kept for 17d. or 18d. a week who had cost twice as much out of the workhouse, but ‘great numbers of lazy people, rather than submit to the workhouse, are content to throw off the mask and maintain themselves.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

But the figures given point, as might have been expected, to the cases of districts where there was not much population. What happened in such cases was apparently a better enforcement of the principle of settlement, the workhouses being rather “houses of correction”<sup>3</sup> than places of real work-test. When an able social historian writes that “the new workhouses often drifted into the practical fallacy of ‘finding work’ for the unemployed, a fallacy as rife then as now, though Defoe, in his admirable pamphlet, *Giving Alms no Charity*, had pierced it through and through,”<sup>4</sup> he sets us asking whether the new workhouses of Walpole’s day were not simply making an avowal which modern society is making—that mere penal work for paupers is not a tolerable solution of the problem of honest unemployment, however well it may suffice to keep off lazy tramps. It might indeed be a great improvement, as regarded decency and humanity, on the practice of whipping beggars out of the bounds; but the anxious effort to “find work” told that even among workhouse administrators there were some who

<sup>1</sup> A. L. Smith, as cited, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by A. L. Smith.

<sup>4</sup> A. L. Smith, as cited:



could find no comfort in setting unemployed men to work that was not work. If "finding work" was a fallacy, why were "workhouses" so named? If "work" was not to be "found" by them, why pretend that it was? The plan, in fact, was not a solution of the real problem. A tremendous death-rate in Walpole's day served the purpose of population check sufficiently to preserve the social system: an expansion of the field of unemployment after 1834 permitted in the Victorian period the better success of workhouses which were still such in name rather than in spirit.

Gee relates<sup>1</sup> that the magistrates of Bristol in his day (1729) kept that city clear of beggars, having real workhouses; and he claims that wherever workhouses are properly managed the parish rates are much lessened. But when he gives as an example the Quaker workhouse in London, where orphan children were taught to read and write and spin or do other work, he reveals the vital difficulty of the case for the parishes in general. Thus society was in a vicious circle. The old Poor Law could be made sound only by making the workhouses effectual *labour* tests; and this could not in general be done. In our own day the common rural test is stone-breaking for the roads; but there were then no metalled roads. There remained but the stupid and cruel machinery of whipping beggars out of bounds; and these, being often unemployed unfortunates—for unemployment then, as long before, occurred chronically in industry—must either beg elsewhere or return to their own parish to live on the rates. Some humane people continued to give charity; others withheld it, reflecting that beggars thus often made more money than did industrious labourers, or that the giving of charity merely relieved the rates, and so benefited the penurious rich.

In short, England, with a population rising from about 5,000,000 in 1695 to 6,000,000 in 1750—a net increase kept thus small only by an enormous death-rate—was

<sup>1</sup> As cited, pp. 39-40.



faced, like other countries, by the problem of relative over-population ; and while Holland so dealt with the problem as apparently to have poverty without beggary,<sup>1</sup> England was faced by both, to a degree that caused distress among the humane, in a period of visibly increasing wealth. The problem had come to stay, for centuries ; for the confident proposals of the various economic reformers were either visionary or capable only of keeping a proletariat in systematic hardship.

### § 10. Progress, English and French.

The inherent and profound difficulty of the total social problem, fully revealed only in the day of Malthus, if then, is the best excuse for the fiscal blundering of the era. To read the various publicists, from Mun and Child to Adam Smith, is to realize how much of real vision and intellectual energy is compatible with defect of science and with confidence in error. They are relatively much more intelligent than the unteachable protectionists of our own day ; every one, even Gee, shows some insight ; and some show much acuteness, still missing scientific grasp and method. Smith, who after the Physiocrats and Steuart first shows the large scientific patience and breadth of scrutiny that the great problem demanded, remains an *à priori* optimist, passing-on a general precept of *laissez-faire* which the next age had to correct after gaining much from its application. And Smith's great performance was possible only after an abundant and cumulative study of economic problems. Dr. Edward Chamberlayne's *Angliæ Notitia ; or, The Present State of England* (1667 ; 15th ed. 1684) is in 1672 only a small book for the pocket,<sup>2</sup> giving little more than lists of officials of government departments ; Guy Miede's *New State of England* in 1703 is a compilation of five times

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *Evolution of States*, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> An expanded and corrected edition appeared in 1687 ; 21st ed., 1704.



greater size giving a good deal of information about trade ; and Davenant and Gregory King, under William, begin the business of national statistics. In 1704 appeared the first English alphabetical encyclopædia, the *Lexicon Technicum* of the Rev. John Harris, the first secretary of the Royal Society. In 1710, publishing enterprise reached to a second folio volume of 1,419 pages, for which there were about 1,300 subscribers. In 1728 came Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopædia ; or, An Universal Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences*, in 2 vols. folio (2nd ed., 1738) ; and in 1751 we come to a *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. It is a progression in painstaking over a problem which always grows more complex as science endeavours to overtake it.

The relative success of the English political system is best to be perceived by comparing it with the chief rival system, that of France. There, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the great Vauban, a man of science, a constructor, and a disinterested patriot—one of the few leading Frenchmen who realised the insanity of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and sought to have it repealed—saw a vicious system of taxation which crippled and impoverished a “naturally” rich country,<sup>1</sup> destined to be still more grievously crippled and impoverished at the disastrous close of the reign of Louis XIV. Vauban saw the rationale of taxation as clearly as did Adam Smith ; and he wrought out a scheme of a *dîme royale* which is in essence a general income tax.<sup>2</sup> It was not adopted by the autocrat ; and the lot of the French peasantry in the mass, as seen by La Bruyère in that age, by Lady Mary Montagu<sup>3</sup> in the next (1718),

<sup>1</sup> He begins his *Dîme Royale* by calling France “not only the most beautiful but the richest country in the world” in respect of fecundity of food. So the *New State of England* (1703) pronounces England “rich and flourishing beyond all other nations” in respect of her foreign trade and her fruitfulness alike (pp. 243-4).

<sup>2</sup> See it set forth in *Vauban Économiste*, by Ferdinand Dreyfus, 1872.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, ed. Moy Thomas, 1893, i 394-5



and by Arthur Young shortly before the Revolution, was one of much more painful poverty than that of the English. They certainly could not be accused of laziness : the picture drawn by La Bruyère,<sup>1</sup> as before by Montaigne,<sup>2</sup> is one of stoical toilers. Theirs was not a drunken poverty. But a bitter poverty it was ; and the English Poor Law system, with all its evils, expressed a social principle which even late in the nineteenth century so impressed French Socialists like Louise Michel as to suggest to them that its establishment counted for something in making the English evolution peaceful and not catastrophic. On the other hand Lady Mary Montagu, revisiting France in 1739, finds everywhere well-paved roads and well-fed and well-clothed peasants. "It is incredible, the air of plenty and content that is over the whole country" ;<sup>3</sup> and she attributes the change to the good governmental system of Fleury. Young, again, finds much poverty in 1787, though he commends the fine roads.<sup>4</sup>

### § 11. Ireland.

What was most profoundly evil in the British evolution was the oppression and alienation of Ireland. Walpole would never have begun it ; but Walpole, as we have seen, did nothing to change it ; the fanatical and selfish forces in England were too strong to be effectually resisted. Under the Restoration had been resumed the deliberate destruction of Irish trade. Ireland, being a non-manufacturing country, could then export only foods and raw material. But the export of Irish like English wool was prohibited in 1660 ; the Acts of 1670 and 1671 made it impossible for Ireland to import any goods direct

<sup>1</sup> *Les Caractères : De l'Homme* (§ 128 in ed. Walckenaer). Ed. Didot, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> *Essais*, Bk. iii, ch. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, as cited, ii. 42-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Travels in France*, ed. 1890, pp. 7, 8, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, etc.



from the colonies in return for her exported provisions ; in 1660 was prohibited the export of Irish cattle to England during half the year ; and in 1663 and later the English import either of cattle or meat or dairy produce from the sister island. The check on wool export, finally, having driven the Irish to the spinning and weaving of wool, the Acts of 1698 and 1699 prohibited all export of manufactured wool from Ireland to any country whatever. The export woollen trade being thus destroyed, the Irish were advised to cultivate their hemp and linen trade ; and even then the English Parliament imposed prohibitive duties on Irish hems and linens, besides excluding certain kinds from the colonial market.<sup>1</sup>

As if all this were not infamy enough, the English Government, trampling on the Treaty of Limerick, proceeded to pass through the Irish Protestant Parliament a series of penal laws designed to crush Catholicism and debase Catholics by depriving them of status, civil liberty and education ; till in 1727 they were deprived even of the elective franchise.<sup>2</sup> Those who affirm the authority of Burke in politics can hardly gainsay his verdict, passed in his Conservative period, that the penal law was “ a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man.”<sup>3</sup> It was to bear frightful fruit, down to the hour of England's peril in the World War. And it is to be observed that this perpetuation of evil in British political life is ultimately a product of religion. Burke of course ascribed it to the spirit of conquest ; but that could never have so survived and energized in the absence of the sectarian motive, which underlies the resistance

<sup>1</sup> See the whole record in Dr. Alice Murray's *Hist. of the Comm. and Fin. Relations between England and Ireland*, 1903, or G. O'Brien's *Econ. Hist. of Ireland in 18th Cent.*, 1911.

<sup>2</sup> Hassencamp's *History of Ireland*, ch. vi.

<sup>3</sup> *Letter to Langrishe*, Works, Bohn ed., iii. 345.



of Ulster to Home Rule down to this hour. The spectacle in the seventeenth century entitled Hume to lay it down as a general rule that "free states" always treat their dependencies worse than do monarchies.<sup>1</sup> But the American colonies were never so mishandled as was Catholic Ireland.

### § 12. Scotland.

Scotland had a happier fate. Thrown back in her higher culture by the ferment of bibliolatrous and sectarian fanaticism which began at the Reformation, she was both materially and politically backward at the time of the Union, despite her relative superiority to England in the matter of popular schooling. But from that date, which marked the end of the feudal tyranny of her nobles, though not of the mortmain of fanaticism,<sup>2</sup> she began to enter anew into the movement of European civilization. It was the boon of freedom of trade with England that alone overbore the intense national aversion from the Union;<sup>3</sup> and Scottish commerce at once began to expand. Under Walpole there was established in 1727 the Scottish Board of Trustees for Manufactures; and what was then her chief manufacture, that of linen, began to be systematically developed; though in 1707 the grotesque English enactment prescribing woollen shrouds had been extended to Scotland.<sup>4</sup> Cotton-making did not cross the Tweed till the second half of the century. But Scotland shared all the general evils of the protective

<sup>1</sup> Essay *That Politics may be reduced to a Science*.

<sup>2</sup> "It was not till the middle of the eighteenth century that the people of Scotland showed any marked improvement in their way of living and carrying on their daily work" (Miss A. H. Stirling, *Sketch of Scottish Industrial and Social History*, 1906, p. 54). This perhaps makes too little account of the development of Glasgow.

<sup>3</sup> Hill Burton, *History of Scotland*, viii. 3 note. Some credit is probably due to Defoe for the Essays he published in both countries in support of the policy of Union.

<sup>4</sup> *This* might accurately be described as an instance of the fallacy of "finding work." The blunder was to try to force a wasteful demand instead of seeking to help towards a sound one.



system along with England ; and the upward movement in her life was at first largely a matter of the rapid entrance of her sons, helped by their schooling, into the general enterprise of English trade.<sup>1</sup> In 1723 was founded the "Society for Improving in Knowledge of Agriculture," which began the movement that in the nineteenth century was to place Scottish agriculture above English. It was sorely needed under George I.

### § 13. Means of Communication.

All over the three kingdoms, in that period, all trade had to struggle against difficulty of communication ; and every transaction across country was slow to a degree now hard to conceive. Canal enterprise began only in the second half of the century. Road traffic was painful at all times, and in winter almost at a standstill. Trade of every kind was thus conditioned, and its volume narrowly restrained. The business of the stockbrokers of London, accordingly, was mostly transacted in one coffee-house ; that of the foreign bankers in another ; and so on. In 1703 the total labour staff of the General Post Office in London, with its penny rate up to a pound weight, was made up of three sorters, receiving fifteen and ten shillings a week ; fifteen town messengers, at eight shillings a week ; and eight country messengers, paid "according to their walk" within fifteen miles of the city. The collective staffs of the five other metropolitan offices—Westminster, Temple, St. Paul's, Southwark, and Tower Hill—were eleven sorters, thirty-nine town messengers, and twenty-three country messengers—fifty-four postmen for the whole London area, and thirty-one for a radius of fifteen miles beyond :<sup>2</sup> "To receive the letters and parcels to be sent according to their directions, there are between four and five hundred shops

<sup>1</sup> Details of Scottish trade in the first half of the eighteenth century are inadequately and confusedly given in D. Bremner's *Industries of Scotland*, 1869. Miss Stirling's *Sketch* is more lucid.

<sup>2</sup> Miede's *New State of England*, 1703, p. 165.



and coffee-houses in city and country; reaping this benefit from it, that their trade does increase thereby." This was the halting progress made in twenty-three years, from Dockwra's establishment of his penny post scheme<sup>1</sup> (1680), upon which the Duke of York as Postmaster-General had laid the hand of power and privilege; as Cromwell's government had crushed the enterprise of John Hill, the York attorney, who aimed at a penny post for all England, a twopenny postage for Scotland, and a fourpenny postage for Ireland. For the country at large, postal communication remained relatively slow in the ratio of its cost.

#### § 14. The Press and its Influence.

While individual enterprise was thus fettered in the simplest matters of transit, as in trade, by a governmental system which could not even put down highway robbery, a comparatively free play of commercial instinct was happily allowed in the field of periodical literature. This constitutes one of the outstanding differences between the eighteenth century and those before. Printing can be seen in three successive centuries serving three successive movements of mental activity, making for popular culture in progressive degrees. In the sixteenth century it is the agent of Protestant propaganda, of which the free play at once subsidizes printing in general and newly develops, for all purposes, the common speech. In the seventeenth, the stress of publicism runs to theological controversy and the political strife which hinged upon that. Without any considerable systematic development of education, the percentage of readers to population evidently increases age by age. In the eighteenth, still without any due development of the school system, the charity schools begun in 1699, and the many village

<sup>1</sup> Under Dockwra's original scheme, London had for a short time "far more extensive postal facilities than even those afforded 160 years later by the plans of Sir Rowland Hill" (Dr. T. A. Ingram in *Encyc. Brit.*, xxii. 178).



schools set up in imitation of them, can be seen to have affected the general life for good. The reading habit must have been more general than ever before, for there is now produced a mass of popular periodical and other literature, appealing to multitudes for whom theological controversy had no attraction and political controversy but little. In particular, the eighteenth century is the age of the systematic production of literature that appeals to middle-class and upper-class women;<sup>1</sup> and it was largely in virtue of its special appeal to them by a criticism of life which ignored politics that the *Spectator* became a recognized classic.

Politics, of course, played a large part in popular literature from the Revolution onwards, in a country in which politics was every man's business; and the political serials, notably Bolingbroke's *Craftsman*, had a wide circulation; but a "general reader," male or female, was on all sides now recognized as a consumer to be catered for. From the abolition of the Licensing Act in 1695, news-sheets began to multiply,<sup>2</sup> scattering at least some kind of information on current events. In 1704 Defoe, in prison for his *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, began a new sort of journalism by issuing a journal prudentially entitled "A Weekly Review of the Affairs of France," which soon came to be issued thrice a week, and in 1706 appeared, unafraid, as "A Review of the State of the English Nation." It was the first really weighty development of English journalism, combining as it did social and political criticism; and it subsisted until Defoe was again imprisoned in 1713, by which time it had given a lead to much new enterprise. It was Defoe, too, who in 1713 produced thrice a week the *Mercator, or Commerce Retrieved*, in support of the

<sup>1</sup> "The progress was probably even greater among women than among men. Swift, in one of his latest letters, noticed the great improvement which had taken place during his lifetime in the education and in the writing of ladies" (Lecky, ii. 153).

<sup>2</sup> Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers*, 1877, i. 65.



treaty of commerce with France, thereby calling out the much less intelligent though more successful *British Merchant* as an organ of the menaced trade interests.

The newspaper stamp duty imposed by the Tory Government on Bolingbroke's urging in 1712—one of a multitude of taxes pretexted by the cost of the war—ruined many newspapers; but though it subsisted for thirty-five years, new journals continued to emerge. Newly important were the developments in the provinces, though the first sheets to appear were but scanty abstracts of news; but in London the movement produced, up to the date of the stamp duty (which practically killed the *Spectator*), a new development in English literature. Under Walpole's rule, the press in general flourished. In 1714 there were "few printers in England, except London."<sup>1</sup> About 1730, some two hundred "half-sheets per month" were issued in London;<sup>2</sup> and about as many in the provinces.

News sheets and literary journals sprang up side by side. The *Tatler*, beginning in 1709, was followed by the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, *Town Talk*, the *Freethinker* (a perfectly orthodox and extremely dull serial) and other weeklies of the same cast; and a succession of journals of serious literary criticism and exposition—the *New Memoirs of Literature*, *Historia Literaria*, and *The Present State of the Republick of Letters*—beginning in 1725, lasts into the age of the monthly magazines and reviews.<sup>3</sup> In 1728, Defoe's son-in-law started the *Universal Spectator*, with an introductory essay by the veteran; and this journal, a partial reversion to the *Spectator* type, lasted for nearly twenty years. In 1731 appeared the *Gentleman's Magazine*, destined to a far longer life; and in 1750 there were eight such periodicals. Here we

<sup>1</sup> Buckle, ch. vii, note 222, citing *Life of Thomas Gent*.

<sup>2</sup> Lecky, ii. 151–2, citing advertisement to first number of *The Gentleman's Magazine*.

<sup>3</sup> These important periodicals, appealing to the cultured of the middle and upper classes, are ignored by Lecky.



have the solid evidence of that general diffusion of some measure of mental life which broadly marks the century in contrast with its predecessors.

Apart from the serious literary journals, which dealt with all the solid books of the age, the culture conveyed is not high ; the poetry is of the pedestrian order which had multiplied like the sparrow from the time of the general acceptance of the fatally facile "heroic" couplet ; and the criticism of life is at best on the conventional plane of the thin-blooded Addison, without his saving grace of humorous art. But, such as it is, it is a mental pabulum for a larger proportion of human beings than had ever at one time had any fair measure of such life since the fall of Greece and the rise of Christianity.

And every species of journalism counted for something in the evolution. It may seem an extravagance to suggest that so equivocal a personality as that of Defoe was a culture influence in any way comparable to that of Addison or Swift ; but his multifarious impact on the life of his age in his many journals and his countless pamphlets must have stimulated thinking on a hundred lines among readers little likely to be reached by other intellectual influences. The constantly ratiocinative cast of his writing, imperfectly seconded though it often was by either deep sincerity or deep reflection, was in itself an educative influence, making for reflection in others. Politics in his hands, it is not too much to say, became much more of a critical exercise than it had previously been for any save the thoughtful few. And as his journalism grew out of his pamphleteering, so his book-making grew out of his journalism ; and *Robinson Crusoe* is the artistic outcome of much utilitarian handicraft in the way of invention for newspaper purposes.

It is strictly true to say that Defoe never saw fiction as an art in itself perfectly worthy of cultivation. He sought to justify his romance not as a work of pure imagination but as an edifying allegory ; and even strove



to overlay it with a mass of didactic matter which his public did not want. If ever writer did, Defoe grew out of his age. It was he who, by the new literary method which he had reached in a strenuous quest of pelf and popularity, gave the lead to the new realistic fiction of Richardson, with its far-reaching influences.

### § 15. Social Values.

Thus, whether we call the process a levelling up or a levelling down, the Walpolean age is, for one thing, an age of popularization of primary mental life on a newly wide scale. The English-speaking peoples, doubtless, will never return to the literature of their so-called Augustan age as they have returned to the Elizabethan, and to Chaucer, and to Milton, for qualities of artistic power and beauty and human charm. Nothing is likely ever again to make men regard Pope and Thomson as great poets: Pope's notion of the poetic, and Thomson's diction, are done with. But we can now see that Pope brought a semblance of poetry into the life of many for whom Shakespeare and Milton spoke a strange æsthetic tongue; and Thomson, as did the greater Gray with a difference, not only recovered for his age something of that finer breath of poetry which Pope lacked, but prepared a path for Wordsworth. There is, in fact, a great deal more of Thomson in Wordsworth than Wordsworthians care to avow. On the other hand, the new fiction of Defoe is visibly a far-reaching and expanding influence on popular culture; and the fiction of Richardson, Fielding and Smollett, all growing partly out of his, was for myriads a new revelation of the interest of the drama of life, outgoing the previous English novel as the Elizabethan drama outgoes the previous drama not only of England but of Italy, France and Spain. They too have ceased to be very readable; but they forwarded life even as did the better politicians. Carlyle's account of Johnson's time as "a dreary,



death-struck age" is one of his worst extravagances. In effect, he generally gave the same account of his own age, which contained few men whom he cared for more than he did for Johnson and Burns; and no politician whom he liked better than Chatham.

Without taking these as our decisive tests, we shall do well to realize further that the superiorities of latter-day civilization to that of Walpole's era are not rightly to be conceived in terms of character-types, or what we broadly understand by "human worth." Critics who disparage Walpole may be invited to say how many later English Prime Ministers could be set above him in point of public or political as distinguished from private merit. Most of them have been as much and as seriously vilified by large bodies of their countrymen as he has ever been by serious critics. Nothing in Walpole's statesmanship is comparable to the ignominious breach of faith by Pitt towards the Irish Catholics at the Union, either in point of loss of honour or in point of the evil entailed. The decorous and really conscientious Peel compares rather unfortunately with him as to general consistency. After Peel, Disraeli was pronounced a trickster and a mountebank by at least as many Englishmen as ever called Gladstone a sophist. And neither the age of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain nor the age of Mr. Lloyd George could be plausibly asserted to have transcended that of Walpole in respect of its popular ideal of a statesman.

It may be well to press the point yet further, and insist that there has been no general transmutation of character in the interval. There are millions of British subjects to-day of no more "worth" than the average under the Georges—myriads of types as trivial, or as inane, or as venomous, or as gross, or as irrational as the multitude of all grades under George II. The visible rise, the progress, in point of quality, has been (1) in public decencies, (2) in the ruling standards of humanity, alike in public and in private relations; (3) in popular culture



and the life-conditions of the mass of the workers ; (4) in the subordination of fanaticism and the degree of deliverance from crass religion ; (5) over the whole field of science ; and (6) over the whole æsthetic field—in the fine arts and fine letters. Our poetry, our fiction, our pictures, our music, our science, our history, our criticism, are nearly as much in advance of those of the age of Swift as are our sanitation and our roads. And yet in all of these matters—even in painting (Hogarth) and in music (Handel)—there were notable stirrings in the first half of the eighteenth century. Gainsborough and Reynolds were then making their beginnings ; and Walpole, whatever he did for literature, did do something for art by his large expenditure on pictures—the way in which he could best give economic stimulus to the evocation of genius.

Nineteenth-century debates on the life of the eighteenth might now usefully be solved by recognizing it as an era of passage from one of civic and religious fanaticism—with shining spaces of Elizabethan poetry and drama, Miltonic epic, and splendid seventeenth-century prose, but with little diffusion of light or leading for the many—to one of revived imagination and recovered vitality of language going hand in hand with science and tolerance. Little as there was of democracy, in the fuller modern sense, in the eighteenth century, it brought about a virtual democratization of culture even as it virtually established the democratic principle in politics under the shackles of an old-world constitutional machinery. It was “the way out” for the national life from the religious and dynastic fanaticisms which overspread the seventeenth century after the lift of the Renaissance in the sixteenth. A nation cannot pass from fanatical superstition in religion and politics to sanity and science in a generation ; it has to begin to build anew, as it were, on the earth of common sense. As late as 1712, Jane Wenham was by a jury found guilty of witchcraft, and was only saved from death by the judge. The peasantry were still



habitually given to "swimming" accused women;<sup>1</sup> and it was only the critical influence of the new deistic movement that finally discredited the superstition.<sup>2</sup> In place of a fantastic and illusory Biblical culture for the majority of all classes there had to be laid a soil of secular culture, in which common minds could grow. There had to be, in Arnold's phrase, "an age of prose and reason" before we could have the age of Shelley, Keats, Lamb, Coleridge, Tennyson, Thackeray, Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, Spencer, Darwin. From Newton to Darwin there must needs be a long span.

### § 16. Literature in Walpole's Age.

In Walpole's age, with Newton's work done, we can see at once the impossibility of a rapid attainment of the right environment for high mental life all round. Only a minority of university men had any but a dim idea of Newton's achievement in Queen Anne's day. When for the last time he stood as parliamentary candidate for Cambridge in 1705, the Tories raised the cry of "The Church in danger"; on the polling day "hundreds of young students hollo'ed, like schoolboys and porters, crying 'No Fanatic, no Occasional Conformity'";<sup>3</sup> and Newton was at the very bottom of the poll, with only 117 votes to the 162 given for his Whig colleague and the 182 given for the Tory at the top. This in Whig Cambridge, which Newton had represented in 1702. Newton's scientific work was to be carried on mainly outside of England, and in particular by Frenchmen, because English energy was to be turned for generations mainly to material and commercial and political expansion; and because, despite a much freer play of published criticism, the Church had

<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson's *Historical Essay concerning Witchcraft*, 2nd ed. 1720, pp. 163-5, 175-6.

<sup>2</sup> See *A Short History of Freethought*, 3rd ed. ii. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Brewster's *Life of Newton*, ii. 218; Cobbett's *Parliamentary History*, vi. 496.



in England a closer hold on the general intelligence than in France, though savage persecution there subsisted longer. Above all, public economic endowment in England was mainly restricted to the Church; science, like art, had next to none; and mental energy ran to trade enterprise, to national adventure, to political strife, to general literature.

The making of an income by authorship of books began to be possible only on the passing of the Copyright Act of 1709-10, passed "for the Encouragement of Learning," but valid rather for the production of popular literature, and in particular of fiction. Writers who harp on Walpole's indifference to literature have the effect of suggesting that if he had patronized it, things might have gone much better; but in reality it flourished much better under the Walpolean peace than under the war policy of Chatham. Literature did much better for itself than Walpole could possibly have done for it;<sup>1</sup> and the useful endowment of science was in Walpole's day out of the question, by reason of orthodoxy. Protestant religion, with its deeper earnestness, has repeatedly proved to have a more repressive influence on scientific thought than formalist Catholicism: it did so in Lutheran Germany till the age of the *Aufklärung*; it did so in England from the Reformation to the Restoration, as compared with

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope, in his hasty and impressionistic tirade against Walpole for letting men of genius starve whom he might have employed or pensioned, can cite only the cases of Savage and Boyse in point (ii. 236). But Savage, a *mauvais sujet* in every respect, actually did get the Queen's pension of £50 in 1732 and spent the money in a week's debauchery. Many people helped him, including Pope, but the subscribers who finally pensioned him had to insist on his living in Swansea. After a year's life there he set out for London, was imprisoned in Bristol for debt, and there died, in gaol. Boyse likewise was abundantly helped; and the Duchess of Gordon procured for him "a place in a public office which he lost by neglect." In London he found new patrons, and lost them all by "his manners." He was an incorrigible drunkard. Such were the geniuses whom Walpole is denounced for not pensioning.



Italy ; and it did so in England as compared with France during a large part of the eighteenth century. It was mainly on the utilitarian side, in invention and machinery, that English science made headway. But none the less the period of Walpole made a great contribution to intellectual progress, giving the lead to the rest of Europe in a wider field of anti-authoritarian thought than that of mathematical science.

It is really on the intellectual side that the evolution of the half-century is most important, though no one could gather the fact from our general histories, even those which specially claim to deal with the progress of culture. Dr. Traill, in his prefatory page on "The Eighteenth Century" in *Social England*,<sup>1</sup> makes the surprising assertion that "in politics alone are there any discernible signs of advance" ; and that "in most other parts of the national life we shall find, in the earlier part of the century, few signs of active growth. The philosophic thought of the age was mainly critical and destructive ; religious sentiment throughout the first half of the century was dormant or declining." One would have supposed that even from the conservative point of view Berkeley and Butler were constructive ; and that a devotee of "religious sentiment" would have recalled the existence of William Law, perhaps the ablest religious writer in eighteenth-century England, whose whole product lies between 1713 and 1760. Concerning all the great output of serious criticism of life and religion, from Toland and Shaftesbury and Anthony Collins to Middleton and the younger Dodwell, *Social England* has nothing to tell. Mr. Whittaker is allowed but a page or two for his admirable summaries of philosophic doctrine ; and Professor Saintsbury does not even name Shaftesbury under the head of literature. It is singular how constantly those who disparage the eighteenth century reveal themselves ill acquainted with its output. It would seem as if the habit of branding Walpole's age as soulless and unpro-

<sup>1</sup> Illustrated ed. v. 1.



gressive had set up in literary minds a foregone conclusion that its literature *must* be unintellectual.<sup>1</sup>

Still more astonishing is the categorical pronouncement of Lecky at the beginning of his fifth chapter,<sup>2</sup> which he "proposes to devote to a brief sketch of the leading *intellectual* and social changes of the period" up to the death of Pelham. "In the higher forms of *intellect*," he goes on, "if we omit the best works of Pope and Swift, who belong chiefly to the reign of Anne, the reigns of George I and George II were, on the whole, not prolific." It is hard to conceive how an otherwise competent historian could put so much misinformation in half a sentence. It is not merely that the account of Swift and Pope is extremely misleading; that the whole of the *Moral Essays*, the *Essay on Man*, the *Satires*, the *Dunciad*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and a multitude of Swift's minor works, including two-thirds of his verse, belong to the reigns of the first two Georges; but that in the same period were produced all the realistic romances of Defoe,<sup>3</sup> beginning with *Robinson Crusoe*, the first masterpiece in English prose fiction; the whole work of Thomson and Collins; most of Gray; most of Johnson, including the *Idler*, the *Rambler*, *Rasselas*, and the *Dictionary*; the whole of Richardson; the whole of Fielding; most of Smollett; and the main part of Hume's *History of England*. A classification which puts the strongest work of Pope and Swift in "the higher forms of intellect,"<sup>4</sup> and leaves out all

<sup>1</sup> Thus we find the late Professor Sidgwick alleging that "in the first half of the [eighteenth] century the movement of thought in England is rather languid" (*Development of European Polity*, 1903, p. 368). This of the period in which were produced all the works of Berkeley, Arthur Collier's *Clavis Universalis* (1713) and Hume's *Treatise*, to say nothing of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Butler.

<sup>2</sup> *History of England*, Cabinet ed. ii. 150.

<sup>3</sup> This Lecky himself had previously (i. 74) noted as belonging to the reign of George I.

<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere (i. 74) Lecky uses the word in the same fashion, indicating among the "highest intellectual achievements" of the age of Anne the work of "Newton [whose *Principia* appeared in



these books as a collectively scanty product, is a remarkable stroke of historiography.

If the charge of sterility or nullity had been laid against the two universities it would have been intelligible. In the eighteenth century they reached their lowest ebb of intellectual and scholarly life. Smith and Gibbon have told of the attitude to rational study that they found there about the middle of the century. And as universities are national institutions, requiring some kind of public supervision, it might *prima facie* be charged against the Government that those of England were so long an intellectual reproach to her. But that was first and last the fault of the Church; and Walpole, of all statesmen, was barred from meddling again with the Church of Sacheverell. The atmosphere produced by its rule in the universities seems to have been positively lethal to intellectual life. J. R. Green, in his *Oxford Studies*, can tell much of Jacobitism and drunkenness, but nothing of scholarly energy. Bentley, the most considerable English scholar of his age, and the father of a considerable tribe of scholars in the next, did nothing of importance in the Georgian period. His planned editions of the Greek Testament and of Homer never appeared; and his edition of Milton is a monument only of the "more excellent folly" which, as Hobbes saw, lawless learning can yield. Fortunately for Georgian England, intellectual life went on the more freely outside the universities because of the stagnation within them; though Middleton did intervene powerfully in the critical movement begun by the deists. And even Middleton's record is rather seriously marred by his unacknowledged use of the material of Bellenden for his *Life of Cicero*.

When we turn to the literature that would normally be classed as "intellectual," the literature of moral and speculative philosophy, and the whole body of the deistical

1687], *Pope, Swift, Addison, Steele, Defoe, Bolingbroke, and Prior*." It never occurs to him to name Shaftesbury or Collins in this connection.



controversy, the judgment of Lecky becomes still more bewildering. To the reigns of the first two Georges belong Arthur Collier's *Clavis Universalis*, Berkeley's *Minute Philosopher*, *Analyst*, and *Querist*; Butler's *Analogy* and *Sermons*; Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (elsewhere<sup>1</sup> pronounced by Lecky "one of the greatest masterpieces of sceptical genius"); his *Essays*, *Moral and Political*, his *Philosophical Essays*, and all the rest of his philosophical work save the posthumously published *Two Essays* and the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*; also the whole work of Francis Hutcheson; and Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. And the main mass of deistical propaganda, preluded by Herbert, Hobbes, and Toland, and turned to definite aggressive criticism by Anthony Collins's *Discourse of Freethinking* in 1713, falls between that date and the posthumous publication of Bolingbroke's philosophical work in 1752 and 1754. It includes Collins's *Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, his *Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered*, and his *Inquiry concerning Human Liberty*; Tindal's *Christianity as Old as Creation*; Middleton's *Letter from Rome and Free Inquiry*; Morgan's *Moral Philosopher*; Dodwell's *Christianity not Founded on Argument*; Parvish's *Inquiry into the Jewish and Christian Revelations*, which first fully raised the problems of the construction of the Pentateuch; and Annet's *Free Inquirer*; as well as nearly the whole critical and philosophic output of Hume.

The bearing of all this output on the intellectual evolution of Europe is recorded by writers better qualified to judge it than was Lecky, who in one of his emptiest periods on the deists had committed himself to the verdict that "The shadow of the tomb rests upon them all; a deep unbroken silence, the chill of death, surrounds them. They have long ceased to wake any interest, or to suggest any inquiries, or to impart any impulse to the intellect of England."<sup>2</sup> In the same page of bad rhetoric we learn that "Woolston and Tindal, Collins and Chubb,

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> *Rationalism in Europe*, ed. 1887, i. 176.



have long since passed into the region of shadows, and their works have mouldered in the obscurity of forgetfulness." They certainly did not earn that fate by writing such deplorable prose as that of their critic, whose "impulse to the intellect of England" has been perhaps of shorter duration than theirs; and who, thus disposing of them, could see fit to busy himself in commemorating historically the *Beggar's Opera*. Looking at culture history with some concern for rational comprehension, we note that the deists—whose work, after being carefully and critically summarized by Lechler in 1841, has been systematically surveyed by Stephen, Lange, Hunt, and Pünjer since Lecky pronounced them drowned in oblivion—were the effective pioneers of an intellectual Reformation which has been going on ever since.

It is a liberal but orthodox German theologian who has avowed that English deism, "by clearing away dead matter, prepared the way for a reconstruction of theology from the very depths of the heart's beliefs, and also subjected man's nature to stricter observation."<sup>1</sup> A more liberal English ecclesiastic in turn has gone further, and claimed that the English deists are the main pioneers of modern Biblical criticism.<sup>2</sup> So much for their direct influence on orthodoxy. But it was not merely a modification of orthodoxy that resulted from their attack: with them there began a dissolution of supernaturalism which can now be seen to have been the definite beginning of its end. It was the deistic movement of Walpole's age that made Englishmen capable of assimilating the lesson of Dutch policy in the Indies to the extent of divorcing their rule in India from Christian intolerance;<sup>3</sup> even as it purified their law code of much barbarism, and made them at length better affected to Ireland. In England, only the great reaction after the French Revolution availed to check

<sup>1</sup> Dorner, *History of Protestant Theology*, Eng. tr. ii. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*, 1893, *ad init.*

<sup>3</sup> Cp. R. Dunlop and Macaulay, cited in *A Short History of Free-thought*, 3rd ed. ii. 172.



for two generations the eliminating process: in France, the new movement begun by Voltaire upon an English stimulus has never been suspended for even a generation.

The deists, in fact, putting as they did a plain issue for men who could not follow Spinoza, democratized rationalism so far as might be in eighteenth-century England, even as the men of *belles lettres* in general democratized literature; and they communicated a new impulse to European humanism even as Newton gave a new impulse to European science. Voltaire visited England in 1726; Montesquieu came in 1732; and "it was Walpole's England that inspired the *Philosophic Letters* and the *Spirit of Laws*."<sup>1</sup> The relative political freedom he saw impressed Voltaire no less than did the freedom of thought; and he never lost the impression. Alike in politics, in religion and in science, the impulse continued abroad after it had seemed to be spent at home; but such impulses are always returned; and, to say nothing of the fruit borne from the deist movement in Gibbon, the intellectual life of the Continent was to react again on that of the island, Montesquieu and Voltaire repaying their debt by engendering a whole school of sociology in Scotland. Hume, Adam Smith, Ferguson, Millar, Dunbar, Kames, are the variously serviceable beginners in Britain of the study of human evolution which was taken up in the next age by Comte, Maine, and Spencer, all of whom might have been better sociologists had they duly studied their predecessors.

### § 17. Summing-up.

If it be asked, finally, what all this has to do with the politicians, the answer is that the work of the politicians is to preserve and improve the social shell in which the writers work. And it is the simple truth that Walpole preserved it for his age. The constitutional and law-guarded freedom which he preserved was for Voltaire an astonishing contrast to the life of tax-wrung France,

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Walpole*, p. 183.



where an evil fisc forced on the people a penury in excess of that wrought by war. Had not Walpole upheld the Hanoverian dynasty, had the other returned and the helm been held by hands like Bolingbroke's, there would probably have been strife such as would have excluded much of the intellectual action and frustrated much of the progress ; there would have been much less of material well-being ; and there would not have been, save at the cost of disastrous conflict, the freedom of the press which marked his rule, and which meant the development of freedom of thought and speech as it had never developed before. To see that Walpole's politics made these things possible is to realize what sound politics means for mankind.

Looking to politics pure and simple, we can see that his strong sagacity formed the matrix for the English liberties of the future when the rest of Europe was heading to the cataclysm of the French Revolution. The fortunate accidents of the advent, first, of a Dutch king, who could take few liberties with the laws, and the later advent of the Georges, of whom the first two either could not talk English or talked it ill, made possible the system of constitutionalism and parliamentarism in which a great manager could reduce constitutional monarchy to fixed custom. Such a manager was Walpole ; and no other politician of his age could conceivably have done his work. This was the view of Peel, whose criticism of Mahon's first draft of his estimate of Walpole at once convinced the historian of his error at one point, and led him to modify his view on others.

It is a kind of spiritual snobbery that makes light of such a man and such a service because of the coarseness of his fibre in other regards. If the devotee of the heroic-picturesque cannot otherwise appreciate the situation, he might bethink him of the analogy of the skippers who handle their tramps and their trawlers amid the gales around the Horn or in the North Sea. They are apt to be unedifying in their language, and perhaps coarse in their tastes ; they have no illusions about their crews ;



they work doggedly for their owners ; and they use the sun and stars for utilitarian guidance, not as topics for philosophic reverie. But they fear neither the face of man nor the might of wind and sea ; they grip like steel where the tornado would brush off like flies the refined people to whom they bring food, or whom they carry under hatches ; and they as a rule bring the ship into port. Such captains “ make good ” for mankind ; and Walpole captained a “ ship of destiny.”

#### NOTE.

Professor Jenks, who fully realizes the importance of the part played by Walpole in our political evolution (*Walpole*, pp. 24, 32-33), and even presents him as a kind of Superman or parliamentary Napoleon who determined to rule England, and did (pp. 23-30), nevertheless sums up (p. 35) that “ He will never live in history as a great man, for he had no trace of that aloofness from common minds, that superiority to common motive, that vein of Quixotism, which is essential to the conception of greatness in *character* ; and, as Mr. Morley has said, in his most admirable and sympathetic study of Walpole, it is by character, more than by achievement, that a man obtains a place amongst the world’s *heroes*.” The problem of what constitutes a “ great man ” is a shifting one ; and I doubt whether this gives a lasting or catholic criterion. Is the greatness of Alexander a matter of his Quixotism or of his achievement ? Do the Quixotic Charles the Bold and Charles XII rank to-day as his compeers ? Are Columbus and Frederick and Napoleon and Marlborough to be ruled out because of their characters ? Was Newton a great *man* ? Was Julius Cæsar, or Hannibal, or Charlemagne ? The great Quixotes and zealots—the Loyolas, the Gordons, the Wesleys—are rather portions of great men than wholes. Perhaps we may ultimately so describe Walpole, Columbus, and many another. The concept “ hero ” is different, and raises another set of discriminations. Vercingetorix was surely a hero in a sense in which Cæsar was not. But Walpole is not likely to be excluded from the list of great men in an age in which Mr. Balfour and others are content to give the title to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.



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